

ACTS OF THE 2003 SYNOD

and

Reports to the 2003 Synod

of the

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

**Rockingham, Western Australia
7 – 16 July 2003**

**Second Session
13-16 October 2003**



Delegates to Synod Rockingham 2003

Rev P Nel (FRCSA), Rev J Poppe (West Albany), Elder J Mulder (Classis North), Rev A VanDelden (Rockingham), Rev W Huizinga (Armadale), Elder T Visser (Classis South), Elder G Reitsema (Classis North), Rev A Veldman (West Kelmscott), Elder J Wielstra (Classis North), Rev J Kroeze (Legana), Rev C Bouwman (Kelmscott), Elder H Ballast (Classis North), Rev W van der Jagt (Byford), Elder M Bax (Classis South), Rev JA Boersema (RCN), Rev M Flinn (RCNZ), Elder M Mulder (Classis South), Rev PKA deBoer (Mt Nasura), Elder W Vanderven (Classis South)

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EVENING SESSION
Monday, 7 July

Article 1 - Opening by the Convening Church

Rev A VanDelden on behalf of the convening church of Rockingham requests all present to Sing Psalm 19:3 and then reads Proverbs 2-3:1-6

He then speaks the following opening address:

Fellow delegates, brothers and sisters in the audience:

I think you will all agree that each Synod of the churches has a profound impact upon church life. Each Synod makes important decisions—decisions that affect us as federation, as individual churches and decisions that affect some of the members personally. So I'm sure that all of us delegates feel the weight of responsibility that has been placed on our shoulders.

I think you will also agree that in order to make good decisions, great wisdom is required. Solomon understood this when he ascended to Israel's throne, and we acknowledge this as we soon take up our places around the tables here in the front. Wisdom is required to make good decisions—decisions that serve for the glory of God and the well-being of God's people.

This shouldn't be a problem, should it, brothers? After all, you elders have been chosen out of quite a number of elders. You were chosen because men felt that you possessed the necessary wisdom to deal with the issues at hand. And some of the elders are learned men—teachers or engineers. And others have attended the school of life for many years and have acquired a lot of practical wisdom.

The need for wisdom shouldn't be a problem for the other half of the delegates should it? After all, as ministers we have all been trained in the doctrine of God's Word, in the confessions and in the Church Order. We have degrees behind our name. And all of us have a number of years of experience in the ministry. And we've been to a number of Synods before.

But you know, brothers, that I am being facetious. I know and you know that none of us delegates possess this wisdom of ourselves. As Reformed people, we confess our natural depravity. We acknowledge that because of our fall into sin, our minds have darkened, and our understanding has become dull, and our thoughts are foolishness.

We know this—and yet we need to be reminded of it because we are inclined to think too highly of ourselves and of our natural abilities. We need to be reminded of the words of Proverbs 3:5b *“Do not lean on your own understanding.”*

To lean on something is to seek support from it. We lean on a person when we need support. We lean on crutches when our own legs won't support us. The sage warns us, *"Do not lean on your own understanding"* for our wisdom is not real wisdom, nor our understanding real understanding.

The sage bids us to seek wisdom and understanding other than our own. Real wisdom and understanding, he says, comes from the LORD. We read in Proverbs 2:6 *"For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding"*

Now we should stop and marvel at the grace contained in these words. The LORD gives wisdom. Wisdom is a gift. Man lost that wisdom through his fall into sin. God is willing to graciously give man the godly wisdom and spiritual understanding that he lost through his rebellion and unfaithfulness. God is willing to impart true knowledge and divine discernment. Yes, here we see God's grace towards us.

This is His grace in Jesus Christ, our Chief Prophet and Teacher. For Jesus Christ was the New Man, and the Renewer of man. He bore the image of God in perfection, and He restores mankind in this image of God. In Isaiah 11 we read of the anointing of Christ: *"The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD"* (v2). Through the anointing of the Spirit, Christ was able to do His work on earth.

Now by the grace of God we are partakers of Christ's anointing, with the result that the same Spirit of wisdom and understanding, and counsel and knowledge is poured out on us. Through the participation in the anointing of Christ, we are also able to do the work that we are given to do at Synod.

But how does the LORD give this wisdom? In what way does He communicate that understanding to us? In the second part of v6 the sage writes, *"From the Lord's mouth come knowledge and understanding."* From the Lord's mouth! The Lord communicates knowledge and understanding through the words that He has spoken—the words that are now written in Holy Scripture. No wonder that Paul says that the Scriptures are able to make us wise to salvation (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). Thus the Spirit imparts this wisdom to us through the Word of God.

Now it remains for us to incline our ear to the words of wisdom that God speaks to us in His Word. That's what the sage writes in Proverbs 2:2. *"Incline your ear to wisdom."* A very free translation would be, *"Put your ears close to the Bible and listen closely."* We have to listen closely, because there is a lot that interferes with our listening. There is our own deafness. There are the voices of false prophets and humanistic philosophers who claim to impart wisdom, but it is earthly wisdom and foolishness. Yes, we have to put our ears close to Bible and listen carefully to the wisdom that God imparts through His Word.

But there's more. We have to pray for wisdom, For the sage says in v3 *"Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding..."* Notice the words that the sage has chosen. *"Cry out!" "Lift up your voice!"* Our prayers for wisdom must passionate prayers, prayers of intensity born out of the realization of how important this wisdom is in making the important decisions that are placed before us.

So we will pray for this wisdom and understanding. And we may pray with confidence. For the apostle James wrote, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5).

Let us sing from: Psalm 119:37,38,39

Opening Speech

On behalf of the convening church of Rockingham, I would like to welcome all the delegates here this evening, as well as the guests in the audience. The members of Rockingham have been at work for some time in preparing for this assembly. We've added another half to our building to accommodate Synod. (By the way, we have sent the bill for building expansion to the Synod treasure as one of the expenses that we've incurred in hosting Synod. I'm sure you'll approve that item on the Synod Treasurer's budget). The Synod Committee that was established has benefited from the manual that the church of West Albany produced and graciously handed down to us. Thank you West Albany! The manual has been a great help. If there are any deficiencies in the preparations for Synod, you are kindly reminded that we have merely followed the manual, and the blame must lie solely on the shoulders of the church of West Albany.

Some of you have travelled only a short way, others from far away. We are thankful that the Lord has granted travelling safety, and that we are all here in good health. Br John Mulder underwent an operation this morning to remove kidney stones and so cannot be with us tonight. He hopes to be with us tomorrow. The doctor told him not to do any work for the next two weeks, and here he is at Synod. Evidently, brothers, there is at least one among us who has a very optimistic—if not naïve—view of what we do at Synod.

I was going to say that this is the first Synod where the churches are not all represented. But that's not really correct. All the churches are represented here. But you know what I mean. There is not a delegate from every congregation in the bond. Some congregations seem to be a bit "hoggish" having two members delegated, while others have none. If one of the proposals on the table of Synod is passed, this would also be the last Synod where there is not a delegate from every congregation. Time will tell.

Acts of Synod 2003

We have some delegates from our sister churches overseas who will be attending synod in an advisory capacity. We welcome Rev J A Boersema from the Netherlands; Rev P Nel from South Africa, and our “home-grown” Rev J Plug from the Netherlands. The RCNZ have also sent a delegate, Rev M Flinn, who will also have the privilege of addressing us. We bid a hearty welcome to them all. Some of you will stay in our midst for a limited time. We—or at least I—envy the brevity of your time at this assembly! We hope that your time in our midst—however long or short—will be profitable for our respective bonds of churches.

It is customary to reflect on some of the events that have taken place since the last Synod. As often in life, we can recount some sad things, as well as some happy things. The churches in Launceston had hoped that their troubles were behind them when at the last Synod Dr B A Zuiddam was examined and permitted to be ordained into the ministry in Launceston. But once again our sister church on the apple island experienced difficulties which culminated in the withdrawal of Dr Zuiddam from the Free Reformed Churches in September of last year. Once again the church of Launceston is vacant. They have arranged for emeritus minister Rev G Wieseke of Canada to help them for six months starting September. Launceston hopes and prays that by the time these six months are over, or sooner, they will have their own minister. They have extended a call to Rev J Poppe of West Albany. We wish Rev Poppe the guidance of the Lord in considering the calls that he has. And we pray that God will provide Launceston with a pastor and teacher in due time.

In December of 2000 Rev Veldman concluded his long ministry in Albany, and began his ministry in the church of West Kelmscott. Since that time the church of Albany has been vacant, though not for lack of trying to secure a minister. Many calls have been extended, but until now the Lord has not yet given them their desire.

According to the Yearbook, the church of Bunbury was instituted on December 25, 2001. They have called and have just received a visit from Rev Rupke of the Netherlands. Some of us were able to visit with him this morning. At this time, he's flying home. May the Lord also guide him in making a decision, and may the Lord also provide Bunbury with a minister in His time.

We also have a new baby sister, instituted yesterday, bringing the number of churches to twelve. If her name is any indication, she's quite a darling, down there between Armadale and Byford. The members of Darling Downs have already purchased themselves a nice parcel of land. Now it's a race with West Kelmscott to see who completes their church building first.

Speaking about church buildings, since the last Synod, West Albany have built a new one. West Kelmscott is still homeless. The Perth “mother church” had a bit of a facelift and is sporting a beautiful new foyer. With thanks to Synod,

Rockingham has added to their building, as mentioned. And I understand the renovations in Mt Nasura have gone through the roof.

The work of mission has continued with some diversification. The church of Armadale and its supporting churches have called but have not received a missionary until now. They have sent a mission worker into the field—br Bolhuis. Mt Nasura continues its mission work in India with br Jacobs. Rockingham has undertaken to support two evangelists in Sumba, and a call to Candidate Edwer Dethan as missionary was declined. The churches here in Australia have also contributed to the work amongst the disenchanted in South Africa. So it's evident that we as churches are busy seeking to fulfil our mission mandate.

Let me conclude these introductory remarks, and let's begin the work of Synod. I declare the twenty-second Synod of the Free Reformed Church opened.

Let's sing Hymn 46:2

Article 2 - Examination of Credentials

The Chairman of the convening church requests the brothers of the Church of Rockingham to examine the delegates' credentials. Having completed this task, the brothers report that all the churches are properly represented by their delegates as follows:

Classis North

Reverend C Bouwman
Reverend P K A De Boer
Reverend J G R Kroeze
Reverend A Veldman
Elder H Ballast
Elder J Mulder
Elder G Reitsema
Elder J Wielstra

Classis South

Reverend W Huizinga
Reverend J Poppe
Reverend A VanDelden
Reverend W van der Jagt
Elder M Bax
Elder M Mulder
Elder W VanderVen
Elder T Visser

Elder L van Burgel was present as alternate on the opening evening in placement of Elder J Mulder (Classis North).

Article 3 - Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman	Reverend A VanDelden
Vice Chairman	Reverend A Veldman
First Clerk	Elder W VanderVen
Second Clerk	Reverend P K A De Boer

Article 4 - Constitution of Synod

The Chairman declares Synod duly constituted.

Article 5 - Delegates agreement with Three Forms of Unity

The Chairman asks delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

All delegates rise.

Article 6 - Adjournment

The Vice Chairman thanks the convening church of Rockingham for its contribution to the arrangements for this synod and asks Synod to sing Hymn 46:1,2. The Vice Chairman leads in closing prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION

Tuesday, 8 July 2003

Article 7 - Re-Opening

The Chairman reopens Synod, asking those present to sing Psalm 111:4,5 and reads from 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. He then leads in prayer. By 10:30 all delegates are present. Br J Mulder is also present for the first time.

Article 8 - Delegates Agreement with Three Forms of Unity

Br J Mulder rises in agreement.

Article 9 - Time Schedules

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Monday to Fridays:	9.00am to 10.30am	Break
	10.45am to 12.00pm	Lunch
	1.30pm to 3.00pm	Break
	3.15pm to 5.00pm	Dinner

Evening Sessions: 7.30pm to 9.30 pm

Saturday Sessions: 9.00am to 12.00pm (No Lunch)

Article 10 - Adoption of Agenda

The final draft agenda is presented.

1. Opening by the Convening Church - Rockingham
2. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of the Agenda
7. Adoption of Meeting Procedure
8. Incoming Correspondence
 - a. Letter Rev. G. van Rongen requesting use of Synod documents.
 - b. F.R.C. Byford four (4) appeals re Art 93 Acts 2000.
 - c. F.R.C. Byford submission regarding submission of proposals at Synod.
 - d. F.R.C. Rockingham Appeal of Art 93 Synod 2000.
 - e. Letters from Dr. P. van Gorp – Holland.
 - f. Classis South submission re. Art 45 C.O.
 - g. Br.& Sr. K. Versluis appeal re Classis North Art 19.
 - h. Deputies' training for the Ministry - replacement Appendix B re. Needy Students Fund.
 - i. Deputies training for the Ministry - updated Appendix B re. Hamilton Theological College Fund.
 - j. Br. L. Schoof appeal re. Inadmissibility of appeals Classis North.
 - k. F.R.C. Mount Nasura appeal re. Art 93 Synod 2000.
 - l. Classis South proposal re. Term Missionaries.
 - m. Classis South proposal re. second appeal court.
 - n. F.R.C. West Kelmscott re C. O. revision.
 - o. Br. L. Schoof appeal re Approval of Acts after Classis closed.
 - p. Classis North credentials for delegates to Synod.
 - q. Classis North list of delegates for Synod.
 - r. P.C.E.A. greetings to Synod.
 - s. F.R.C. Albany proposal re RCNZ.
 - t. F.R.C. Launceston re Art 54 Synod 2000.
 - u. Br. L. Schoof appeal re Classis North rules.
 - v. F.R.C. Kelmscott re Classis North April 2003.
 - w. F.R.C. Kelmscott re Art 93 Synod 2000.
 - x. F.R.C. Kelmscott re Art 19 Classis North October 2002.
 - y. Br. J. Byl appeal decisions Classis North 2001.
 - z. F.R.C. Albany re Term Missionary.
 - aa. F.R.C. Rockingham re Mission work.
 - bb. F.R.C. Rockingham re Synod Rules and assistant clerk.
 - cc. F.R.C. Rockingham re next convening church.
 - dd. F.R.C. West Albany proposal re. R.C.N.Z.
 - ee. Br & Sr L Woonings appeal Classis North Decisions

Acts of Synod 2003

- ff. Br D. Van Den Dool re Classis North 2003
- gg. Br D. Van Den Dool re. inadmissibility of submissions
- hh. Classis South list of delegates
- ii. Classis South re report of revision of C.O.
- jj. F.R.C. Mount Nasura overture to synod re. Rev R S Ward.
- kk. Br D. Van Den Dool appeal Classis North April 2003 on p6
- ll. Br. D. Van Den Dool appeal Classis North April 2003 article 24.
- mm. F.R.C. Kelmscott audit Synod Treasury books
- nn. F.R.C. Kelmscott proposal re. copies of Provisional Draft Agenda
- oo. F.R.C. Kelmscott re article 17 and 19 of Classis North October 2002
- pp. F.R.C. Byford re Article 41 Acts Synod 2000
- qq. F.R.C. Byford notes on the R.C.N.Z.
- rr. F.R.C. Byford english "Call for Reformation" and four Dutch brochures
- ss. F.R.C. Mount Nasura re. article 17 and 19 Classis North October 2002
- tt. F.R.C. Mount Nasura proposal re Presbyterian Church of Korea
- uu. F.R.C. Mount Nasura proposal re mission work and C.O.
- vv. F.R.C. Mount Nasura proposal relations with other churches
- ww. Br & Sr CJ Byl appeals on Classis decisions
- xx. F.R.C. Armadale proposal re Presbyterian Church of Korea
- yy. F.R.C. Kelmscott – Information re Appeal
- zz. Greetings from Canadian Reformed Churches
- 9. Instructions
- 10. Reports by Classis Churches
- 11. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
 - a. Report Deputy for the Revision of Church Order and The Ecclesiastical Documents
 - b. Report Deputies for the Book of Praise
 - c. Report Synod Treasurer's Financial
 - d. Report Deputies for Training for the Ministry
 - e. Report Deputies Relations Other Churches (Reformed) - *(Distributed separately)*
 - f. Report Deputies Relations Presbyterian Churches *(Distributed separately)*
 - g. Report Deputies Relations Sister Churches *(Distributed separately)*
 - h. Report Deputies Indonesia, Philippines Churches *(Distributed separately)*
 - i. Report Deputies Nominating Authorities.
 - j. Report Deputies for Archives and Library of Synods.
 - k. Report Deputies auditing books for Deputies for Article 17 and 18 of the Church order.
 - l. Report Deputies inspection of Archives and Library

- m. Supplementary report from Deputies Relations with Sister Churches.
- 12. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
- 13. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
- 14. Appointment of Deputies
- 15. Appointment of convening church, and place and time of the next Synod
- 16. Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order
- 17. Personal questions
- 18. Adoption of Acts
- 19. Approval of Press Release
- 20. Censure according to Article 47 of the Church Order
- 21. Closing of Synod

Material for items 8yy and 8zz were distributed to delegates, as this material was submitted after the final deadline.

Admissibility of incoming correspondence is to be judged when an item is to be dealt with.

ADOPTED

Article 11 - Homepage on Internet

A proposal from the executive to place Acts of Synod also on the Internet is adopted, on the proviso that the matters of personal nature are excluded. Also in matters relating to other churches, discretion will be used.

ADOPTED

Article 12 - Proposal to amend Synod Rules 1.5 and 3.2

(Refer Art 105)

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 8bb Rockingham proposal regarding modifications of the Synod rules as they relate to an Assistant Clerk.

II. Decision:

Proposal Regarding Rule 1.5 (Additions underlined)

"Arrange meeting accommodation for synod and its committees; any necessary sound amplification; all administrative support facilities; and refreshments and meals. Also, recommend to Synod a qualified administrative assistant to the Clerk (see Rule 3.2)."

ADOPTED

Proposal that Assistant Clerk to be remunerated in line with the rate agreed to for delegates.

ADOPTED

Proposal Regarding Rule 3.2 (Officers of Synod)

(Additions underlined)

"The vice-chairman shall assist the other Officers of Synod where needed, and prepare the Press Release of Synod. The first Clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. He shall have responsibility for synod's administration facilities, and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates. An assistant recommended by the convening church (see Rules 1.5) shall be appointed to record the Acts of Synod during the open sessions. At the conclusion of synod he shall be responsible for printing and distributing these Acts. The second Clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall place a copy of all such correspondence in synod's Archives."

III. Grounds:

The task of recording the Acts of Synod restricts the clerk's full participation in the discussion and decision making process of Synod. Will reduce workload of Clerk during and after closing of Synod.

ADOPTED

A proposal from Synod floor is made that Synod amend Rule 3.2 to remove the words "...during the open sessions:"

DEFEATED

Proposal from Free Reformed Church Rockingham regarding Rule 1.5, 3.1 and 3.2:

"Alternatively, Synod may decide that with an assistant, there is no need for the first and second clerk in Synod, and may appoint only one clerk."

At end of Synod this proposal was considered:

DEFEATED

(Refer Art 105)

Article 13 - Proposal from Byford regarding Synod's handling of Correspondence

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 8c Submission from Byford regarding the handling of proposals from churches and Deputies.

II. Decision Item 1 and 2:

Byford proposes:

1. All proposals (from the churches and including those of deputies) that are admissible must be tabled and decided upon.
2. The admissibility of proposals must be decided upon with appropriate grounds and recorded in the Acts.

ADOPTED

III. Decision Items 4 and 5

Byford proposes:

4. To amend the Rules for Synods by adding Proposal 1 (above) after the current Rule 7.3.
"7.4 All proposals (from the churches and including those of deputies) that are admissible must be tabled and decided upon."
5. To amend the Rules for Synods by adding Proposal 2 (above) after the current Rule 7.7.

ADOPTED

IV. Items 3 and 6

Byford proposes:

3. All proposals and decisions must be recorded in the Acts of synod.
6. To amend the existing Rule 7.8 of the Rules for Synods by adding the sentence "Proposals that are superseded by another proposal that was adopted shall be recorded as LAPSED." after the sentences "Proposals declared in the affirmative shall be recorded as ADOPTED. Proposals declared in the negative shall be recorded as DEFEATED".

Decision:

Not to accede to Items 3 and 6.

Grounds:

Synod deemed it not necessary to add to the existing rules.

ADOPTED

Article 14 - Request from Synod Executive on how to deal with the Appeals that are before Synod

I. Materials:

Agenda items 8 g, j, o, u, v, x, y, ee, ff, gg, kk, ll, oo, ss, ww, yy.

II. Recommendations:

1. Synod decides to appoint an advisory committee of four members of synod with the mandate to prepare a report plus recommendations re the agenda-items above and to submit this report whenever they have done justice to the appeals.
2. Both the appellants and those appealed against should have the opportunity to be heard by the advisory committee and, if necessary, by synod.
3. It is wise to include in this advisory committee only those members of synod who have not judged these issues before.
4. Whereas all members of synod are included in the discussions of these appeals, only those who have not been directly involved in

judging these matters before should make a final judgment on these appeals.

5. The advisory committee should also address the question of the admissibility of the appeals.

III. Grounds:

1. The material submitted is large and complex and it may be hard to prepare a report during the two weeks of a normal time-period.
2. To judge these appeals, synod, including its advisory committee, should hear both sides; in preparation of the material for discussion an advisory committee of synod needs time to hear both sides of the argument;
3. Material submitted in the agenda items above has to do with certain aspects of church doctrine. An advisory committee may need time to consult others; the seriousness of the issues justify a proper and extensive preparation;
4. In order to do justice it is wise and proper not to appoint to the advisory committee those who have dealt with these issues beforehand. Meanwhile all members of synod have the opportunity to discuss the appeals and the report of the advisory committee.
5. There is the question of admissibility. Often one can only determine admissibility after having digested the appeals. Thus it is best to ask the advisory committee to advise on this question as well.

IV. Decisions:

Recommendation 1, 2, 3 & 5

ADOPTED

Recommendation 4

DEFER decision for several days.

Proposal to amend Recommendation 2 to delete words "...and, if necessary, by synod"

DEFEATED

Article 15 - Matters Affecting Sister Relations – Overture by Mount Nasura

I. Materials:

Agenda items 8vvMt. Nasura overtures synod to decide that in considering relations with other churches:

1. The church pluriform practice of permitting guest ministers of non-sister church to proclaim God's Word and to permit guests of such churches to the celebration of the Lord's Supper is an obstacle to entering into sister relations.

2. It is essential to maintain the confessed Scriptural comfort that the Lord has made His covenant with the believers and their children.

DECLARED INADMISSIBLE

II. Grounds:

This letter was written on 17 June 2003. It deals with a new matter that would apply to all contacts and relations and thus should have been sent via the minor assembly at least four months before synod. Thus it is inadmissible.

Article 16 - Request from Rev G van Rongen

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8a

II. Decision:

Synod decides to accede to Rev van Rongen's request to use a copy of the Acts to enable him to publish a supplement to his book on the Church Order and standing decisions of synods of the FRCA.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION

Tuesday, 8 July 2003

Article 17 - Re-Opening

Synod is re-opened in the evening session. The Chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 37:12,15 and 16.

Article 18 - Welcome to Overseas Visitors

The Chairman welcomes Rev J Plug and Rev Dr J Boersema from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Rev P Nel from the Free Reformed Churches South Africa and Rev Flinn from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Article 19 - Credentials

The Chairman reads out the credentials for Rev J A Boersema and Rev J Plug provided by BBK from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and for Rev P Nel provided from the FRCSA. These delegates are afforded the privileges as determined by Synod for delegates from sister churches.

The Chairman also reads out the credentials for Rev M Flinn from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. He is invited to sit as observer with the privileges determined by Synod for observers.

The Delegates from overseas rose to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

Article 20 - Extra Privileges for Rev Flinn

Synod decides that Rev Flinn be given the following privilege:

1. To be able to address Synod on matters regarding the RCNZ if requested.
2. To be able to request Synod to speak on matters requiring clarification.

Article 21 - Address by Rev J Plug

Rev J Plug addressed Synod on behalf of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The full text of the address is at *Appendix 1*.

Article 22 - Book of Praise

(Refer Article 26)

I. Materials:

Agenda item 11b Deputies Report for Book of Praise
Agenda item 8t Overture from F.R.C. Launceston regarding error
made by Synod 2000 of the FRCA by suggesting that the NKJV was
endorsed by Synod 1996 of the FRCA, when it was recommended.

II. Decision:

To accede to the request of Launceston to recognise the error made by Synod 2000 regarding the Book of Praise.

ADOPTED

Discussion continued in Article 26.

Article 23 - Adjournment

After inviting Synod to sing Psalm 127:1, Elder H Ballast closes in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod to Wednesday, 9 July 2003 at 9.00am.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 9 July 2003

Article 24 - Re-Opening

Elder J Wielstra asks Synod to sing Hymn 35:1, 2, reads from Scripture Ephesians 4:1–16 and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 25 - Appointment of Advisory Committee 1

Following request to Synod, Rev A VanDelden was included in the Advisory Committee.

Reverend W. Huizinga Convenor
Elder J Mulder
Reverend A VanDelden
Elder T Visser

Article 26 - Book of Praise

(refer to Article 22)

I. Materials:

Agenda item 11b Deputies' Report for Book of Praise
Agenda item 8t Overture from F.R.C. Launceston regarding error made by Synod 2000 of the FRCA by suggesting that the NKJV was endorsed by Synod 1996 of the FRCA, when it was recommended.

II. Decisions:

1. To thank deputies for their work, and relieve them from their duties.
2. Recognise the error of Synod 2000's decision regarding the Book of Praise.
3. Not to accede to the deputies' proposal to print an Australian version of the Book of Praise at this point in time.
4. To appoint deputies with the mandate:
 - a) to ascertain the desirability and necessity for the publishing of an Australian version of the Book of Praise (also by asking the churches for feedback);
 - b) to monitor ongoing developments in the Canadian Book of Praise and report to synod on their plans re: the updating of language of the psalms and hymns, the confessions, and liturgical forms, especially considering the CanRC's ongoing contact with the United Reformed Churches;
 - c) To report back to the upcoming synod six months prior to the commencement of synod.

III. Grounds:

1. Synod 1996 did not "endorse the NKJV as the faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches," but recommended this version for use in the churches, while also recognising the NIV as a translation which may be used by the churches which prefer that translation.

The desirability of publishing an Australian Book of Praise has not been established by the churches.

It is desirable to ascertain the direction of the Canadian churches, especially if they are in the process of updating the language of the psalms and hymns. Then we would be able to provide a complete updated version of the Book of Praise.

ADOPTED

Article 27 - Contact with Dutch Sister Churches

I. Materials:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Item 11g | Deputies' Relations with Sister Churches report. |
| Item 8e | Letters from Dr. P van Gorp - Holland |
| Item 8rr | Submission from Byford submitting the 'Call for Reformation' which is a private appeal from members in the Dutch Sister Churches. |
| Item 11m | Supplementary report from Deputies' Relations with Sister Churches. |

II. Admissibility of Item 8e
DECLARED INADMISSIBLE

Grounds:

1. Synod Rules 7.3 states: "The admissibility of an agenda item shall be decided at the time the item is scheduled for consideration. Submissions not from the churches, except those allowed by the Church Order, shall be received for information only and require no acknowledgement."
2. This is not a submission from one of the churches.

III. Admissibility of Item 8rr
DECLARED ADMISSIBLE
Received for Information

IV. Decisions:

After one round of discussions, the matter has been deferred to allow delegates to prepare several amendments to the deputies' recommendations.

DEFERRED

Article 28 - Contact with Canadian Reformed Churches

I. Materials:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Item 11g | Deputies' Relations with Sister Churches report |
|----------|---|

II. Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to established rules.
2. To monitor developments with the CanRC for mutual benefit, according to our rules.
3. To authorise the deputies to send one delegate to the 2004 General Synod of Chatham

III. Grounds:

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Some developments with the CanRC parallel those in our Dutch Sister Churches. We should stay informed, monitor these developments and be of help to each other. In this way there is also consistency in the way we deal with our Sister Churches.
3. We value our bond with our American/Canadian Sister Churches; we can learn from each other; and should keep in good contact with them. Personal contact at synodical level reinforces this.

ADOPTED

Article 29 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 1–16 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 30 - Contact with Presbyterian Church of Korea

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 11g Deputies' Relations with Sister Churches Report
Agenda Item 8tt The Church at Mount Nasura notes that the sister relation with the Korean Presbyterian Church (Kosin) has not functioned. It requests synod to decide that unless this relationship improves, it be phased out.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Agenda Item 8xx Overture from Armadale. "After so many years it is responsible to draw the conclusion that the rules governing our relationship with the PCK do not allow continued contact. Why not recognise that in practice we receive no attests or visitors from the PCK or visa versa, and neither do we call their ministers or they ours? The relationship is not meaningful at all."

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decisions:

1. That the FRCA continue Sister Church Relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK) according to the established rules.

2. That deputies are mandated to use the opportunity to improve contact with the PCK by direct dialogue with Dr S.G. Hur and the Fraternal Relations Committee.
3. In an endeavour to strengthen ties and communications with the PCK, that, if received, we accept the invitation to the next General Assembly of the PCK.
4. That deputies include in their report to next synod an assessment about the viability of continued relations with the PCK on the basis of the adopted rules for sister relations, together with recommendations.

III. Grounds:

1. No evidence has arisen suggesting that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) has departed from the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions or the Church Order.
2. Dr. S.G. Hur has offered to assist in the contact and dialogue with PCK and sees that it is important to continue with this work.
3. The PCK has received the least amount of attention over the years and deputies have not been to the General Assemblies of the PCK to pursue the task under the Rules for Sister Church Relations.
4. As Mt Nasura and Armadale rightly note, a sister relation that does not function should be recognized as such.

ADOPTED

Article 31 - Proposal regarding Term Missionary

(refer Article 36)

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 8L Having discussed Armadale's request, classis south requests Synod 2003 to make a new ruling in the line of Art 55 Synod 2000;

- a) So that a trained person with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a special 'term-missionary' for mission work only, and only for an agreed term;
- b) That this person should undergo an exam by classis prior to ordination; and
- c) That upon completion of his term he will be released officially by the sending church and the classis.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Grounds:

Synod decided by special resolution to admit this item to the agenda of synod. Although the item is a new item, and arrived after the closing date set by the convening church, there are exceptional circumstances. The church of Armadale has brought this item to synod via the classis, and this meeting was convened too late to be able to meet the strict requirement of

coming to synod prior to the closing date for the submission of new items of business.

Agenda Item 8z Albany expressing difficulty with the direction decided on by Classis South.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Synod had one round of discussion on this matter. Continued in Article 36.

Article 32 - Submission Article 45 Church Order

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 6f Submission on Article 45 Church Order from Classis South

Original Article 45 reads as follows: *“A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgement of at least two classis this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod subject to the approval of its classis.”*

Classis South proposes an amendment to Article 45 as follows: *“A synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of any one church with the concurring advice of its classis if according to the judgement of at least two classis this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod subject to the approval of its classis.”*

II. Decisions:

Synod agrees to the following change to Article 45.

“A Synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of a classis. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod.”

III. Grounds:

1. Original wording in place in our church order is taken from the church order of a larger bond of churches with a larger number of classis.
2. Original wording would lead to the possibility of five churches in our bond wishing to hold an extra-ordinary synod while three churches all in one classis do not want this synod. This is not the intent of the church order.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 9 July 2003

Article 33 - Re-opening Evening Session

The chairman invited Synod and audience to sing Psalm 108: 1 & 2.

Article 34 - Address by Rev Flinn of the RCNZ

Rev M Flinn addressed Synod on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand conveying greetings. The full text of the address is in the appendix.

Article 35 - Response to Speech of Rev J Plug

Rev W Huizinga responded to the address of Rev J Plug of the Dutch Sister Churches.

Article 36 - Continuation on Matter of Term Missionary

(Refer Article 31)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8L and 8z

II. Decisions Regarding Material 8L:

Synod discusses an amended proposal regarding Classis South request as follows:

To make a new ruling in the line of Art 55 Synod 2000;

1. As an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only.
2. That this person should undergo an examination by classis as agreed upon in the Church Order
3. That upon completion of his missionary task he will be released from office by the sending church and the classis at which time he will lose his ministerial status.

Grounds:

1. This task should be carried out by a minister of the word (missionary) even though he may not have the full theological training
2. At times there is a real lack of fully trained men who are able and willing to serve as missionary.

III. Amended Proposal:

Proposal from Synod floor to amend decision 1 and add at beginning "In this specific instance of Armadale ..."

Ground #2 to modify "At times" to "At this time..."

DEFEATED

IV. Decision

A vote is taken on the above proposal and grounds

ADOPTED

V. Decision Regarding Material Item 8Z

1. To concur with the Church of Albany by deciding that as churches we do not recognize the position of "term missionary" as a 4th office among the churches.
2. To concur with the Church of Albany that someone may only become eligible for the ministry according the provisions of CO Article 5, but Synod decides to agree with Classis South's proposal that, as an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only. Part of Classis South's proposal is that this person should undergo an examination by classis as agreed upon in the Church Order
3. When agreeing with Classis South to an exceptional ordination of a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only, this includes an exception to CO Article 15 by which ministers are normally bound for life.

Grounds:

1. The Church of Albany is correct that the Churches have agreed there are 3 offices (CO Article2). This task should be carried out by a minister of the word (missionary) even though he may not have the full theological training (CO Article 12)
2. As an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only.
3. Since the ordained brother has only been prepared for the special work of foreign mission, his call does not continue when he is released by the sending church and classis.

ADOPTED

Article 37 - Overture from Byford requesting that each church be represented at synods by two delegates

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 8pp The consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003

- a) To declare that the decision of Synod 2000 as formulated in Art 41 Acts Synod 2000 that "5. As long as there are two Classis each Classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders" doesn't do full justice to the actual situation of

the bond of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

- b) To decide that all the local churches shall delegate 1 minister [or in a vacancy 1 elder] and 1 elder .

DECLARED INADMISSIBLE

II. Grounds:

1. Art 33, C.O. states that matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.
2. Since this matter is not new but was dealt with by the 2000 Synod (Art.41 – a decision with similar grounds), and was defeated, this matter should not be reintroduced without new grounds.
3. The Byford submission does not really introduce new grounds.

ADOPTED

Article 38 - Classis South request to investigate a Second Appeal 'Court'

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8m Classis south requests Synod 2003 to appoint deputies with the mandate to:

- a) To investigate whether it is necessary, advisable and possible in the Australian church situation to have a second appeal 'court' in ecclesiastical matters in between Classis and General Synod, convening every year;
- b) To submit their report to next synod according to the rules of synod.

II. Grounds:

1. Till the decision of Synod 2000 to divide the FRChurches of Australia into two Classis [Acts Synod 2000 art 36] the consistories and church members could appeal – before they eventually would appeal to the General Synod – to the second appeal church according to the regulations as formulated in the Australian Church Order art 31. in italics, up till Synod 2000;
2. In the history of the Reformed churches the Scriptural basis and necessity of a second appeal 'court' [the Provincial or Region Synod] has been upheld [compare H. Bouwman, Gereformeerd Kerkrecht, het recht der kerken in de practijk; Kok/Kampen 1934. vol II. Page 187ff];
3. In important issues pertaining to church and church life especially church discipline as a matter of 'life and death' [Mat 18:17-19] it takes too long to wait for the next General Synod to be held every three years.

III. Decisions:

Proposal from Synod Floor to delete the words in Item 1 “convening every year;”

ADOPTED

Proposal from Synod Floor to amend proposal so that an advisory committee is set up to deal with this matter and prepare a report for this synod.

DEFEATED

Synod votes on the request from Classis South as per Item 8m with the amendment adopted above.

ADOPTED

Article 39 - Synod Adjourns

Elder M Bax requests Synod to sing Psalm 8:1 & 3, which is ably supported by the audience. He then leads in prayer.

Chairman adjourns Synod.

MORNING SESSION ***Thursday, 10 July 2003***

Article 40 - Re-opening

Elder T Visser asks Synod to sing Psalm 24:1,3,5, reads from Scripture Psalm 24, and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 41 - Contact with Dutch Sister Churches

(Refer Article 27, 100)

I. Materials:

Agenda Items 11g, 8rr, 11m

II. Overall recommendations concerning the RCN

Decision:

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations;
2. To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a) Exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;

- b) According to the rules, discuss and to continue to discuss with the RCN Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the RCN, and as outlined and recommended in the report of deputies (see below);
- c) Report to next Synod
- d) To instruct deputies to send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN. (refer Article 100)

Grounds:

- 1. The RCN gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, their Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- 2. Deputies have pointed out and given evidence about some specific concerns. These should continue to be addressed, according to the rules.

ADOPTED

III. Fourth Commandment

A proposal from Synod floor to amend the deputies' recommendation as follows:

Decision:

To instruct deputies to:

- 1. Stay informed about the developments and decisions in the RCN with respect to the 4th commandment re the Sunday.
- 2. to interact with the Dutch deputies on the matter

Grounds:

- 1. Our correspondence and discussions with the RCN on this matter have resulted in some progress. Thus the discussions, according to the rules, should be continued, especially with a view to the Dutch deputyship studying this matter.

ADOPTED

IV. New Hymns

Decision:

- 1. To keep monitoring these decisions in accordance with our Rule b (to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in...liturgy) and to become more acquainted, in a selective manner, with the hymns that are approved and are being approved.
- 2. To investigate the principles and criteria for selecting and approving these new hymns.
- 3. Meanwhile in general to continue to express our concern toward the GKV about the proliferation of new hymns.

Grounds:

1. It is unrealistic to ask the deputies to study all these newly approved hymns. Yet in order to mutually care for the GKV with conclusions about these hymns we would need to do exactly that, i.e., study all the new hymns, even as the GKV has done. Thus to monitor them in a selective manner would be the best way.
2. The need to be specific in our selective monitoring is born out by the decision of our Canadian sisters. They have decided (art.97, Acts of the 2001 GS of Neerlandia) to receive submissions and proposals for additional hymns from the churches with the reasons for their suitability. One consideration (4.1) was that though this synod was cautious with respect to the additional 120 hymns in the GKV, their own Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) did not give evidence to show that the changes taking place in the GKN(v) are wrong (Art 80, Cons. 4.7). In the same consideration it added, while there are concerns about adding a large number of hymns, it cannot be said without further investigation that the increase of hymns in the GKN comes at the expense of singing Psalms.
3. In this process it is important to study the principles and criteria used to select and to approve new hymns. This will also be helpful for us in time to come.
4. At the same time the great multiplication of these new hymns, just by their great numbers as well as other factors mentioned in the deputies' letters to the RCN, continues to concern us.

ADOPTED

V. Military Chaplains and the Lord's Supper

Decision:

1. Deputies should further examine the decision of GS Zuidhorn to ascertain whether or not our concerns were alleviated and relay their findings to the Dutch Deputies.

Grounds:

1. Further study is required of the GS Zuidhorn decision to determine if it is in accordance with Scripture and the Confessions.
2. Because our concerns were relayed to the Dutch Deputies, they deserve a response.

ADOPTED

VI. Blessing by a non-Elder

Decision:

1. Deputies should further examine the decision of GS Zuidhorn to ascertain whether or not our concerns were alleviated and relay their findings to the Dutch Deputies.

Grounds:

1. Further study is required of the GS Zuidhorn decision to determine if it is in accordance with Scripture and the Confessions.
2. Because our concerns were relayed to the Dutch Deputies, they deserve a response.

ADOPTED

VII. Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken (Christian Reformed Churches of The Netherlands) – CGK

Decision:

1. To encourage our sister-churches in their pursuit of unity with the CGK on the proven basis of God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practised by the Church Order of Dort.
2. To monitor the developments and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. These churches have the same basis. The Union of 1892 should have seen both within one federation. Though this did not occur then, the mandate of our Lord and his prayer to be one obliges us to seek this unity.
2. Since these developments are ongoing, it is good to keep the churches posted.

ADOPTED

VIII. Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (Netherlands Reformed Churches) - NGK

Decision:

To instruct Deputies:

1. To encourage the RCN in their contacts with the NGK and to encourage to continue to insist on the need within the NGK for binding to God's Word as confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, and also to insist on the proper place of the Church Order to counteract independentism.
2. To encourage the RCN to assess carefully the events of the split in the 1960s.
3. To keep in close contact with the Dutch Deputies and to report to the next synod.

Grounds:

1. The binding to the Scriptures and confessions as well as the proper place of the Church Order for the bond of churches are the crucial points of division. We should encourage our Sister Churches in these matters.

2. The subject of the split in the 1960's will be investigated. It should be done carefully.

ADOPTED

Article 42 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 17-39 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 43 - Advisory Committees

Committee Two

- Agenda Items: 11c, 8mm, 12, 13
- Members: M Bax (Convenor), M Mulder

Committee Three

- Agenda Items: 8n, 8ii, 8nn, 11a
- Members: C Bouwman (Convenor) J. Wielstra, G Reitsema

Committee Four

- Agenda Items: 11h, 8aa
- J Kroeze (Convenor) H. Ballast; J Poppe

Article 44 - Appeal from Byford re Art 93 Synod 2000

(refer Article 62)

1. Material:

Agenda Item 8b – Appeal 1:

By accepting the letter of West Albany, dated 2nd June 2000, for discussion in Articles 74, 76, 89 and 93 of Acts of Synod 2000, Synod implicitly considered them admissible. Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that this letter of West Albany, containing the proposals “*to recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ*” and “*to offer to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ*” (Article 93 Acts Synod 2000) was inadmissible.

Agenda Item 8b – Appeal 2:

The consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that this letter of Albany, containing the proposal “*to recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Article 93 Acts Synod 2000) was inadmissible.

Agenda Item 8b – Appeal 3:

The Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that the *Alternative Proposal* of Article 93, Acts of Synod 2000, is inadmissible.

Agenda Item 8b – Appeal 4:

The Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that the *adopted* decision of Article 93, Acts of Synod 2000, is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order.

(Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

ITEM 8B DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision:

Not to accede Appeals 1, 2 & 3 to declare the letter of West Albany inadmissible.

III. Ground:

The letter from West Albany responded to the deputies' report and it was submitted on time. Thus it was admissible.

ADOPTED

(Appeal 4 is addressed in Article 62)

EVENING SESSION
Thursday, 10 July 2003

Article 45 - Re-opening

Chairman reopened Synod by asking Synod and visitors to sing from Psalm 107:1,2. Br L van Burgel joined Synod as alternative for Br H Ballast.

Article 46 - Address from Rev P Nel - Sister Churches in South Africa

Rev P Nel addressed Synod on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA). The full text of the address is found in *Appendix 1*.

Article 47 - Response to Address of Rev Flinn of RCNZ

Br L van Burgel responded to the address of Rev Flinn of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. The full text of the address is found in *Appendix 1*.

Article 48 - Appeal from Rockingham re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 67)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8d Rockingham makes the following 4 appeals that the decision made in Article 93 of Synod 2000:

1. is contrary to Article 57 of the Church Order;
2. is contrary to Article 67 of Synod 1985;
3. disagrees with an earlier decision of Synod 1992 (Art 95);
4. disagrees with grounds upon which Synod has made previous decisions;

(Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Several rounds of discussion occur regarding each of the grounds.

Decision:

Proposal from Synod Floor to bundle all appeals and forward to an advisory committee.

DEFEATED.

Article 49 - Appeal from Mount Nasura re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 52, 62, 68)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8k The Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura requests Synod to declare that the decision recorded in Article 93 of Synod 2000 Acts is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions, the Church Order, contradicts previous synod decisions, and places an untenable practical inconsistency on the churches; and is therefore rescinded and declared void. (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2).

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Several rounds of discussion occur regarding the grounds presented in the appeal.

Article 50 - Synod Adjourns

Rev C Bouwman invites brothers and sisters in attendance to sing Psalm 18: 9 & 10. He then leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until 1:30pm on Friday.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Friday, 11 July 2003

Article 51 - Re-opening

Rev PKA deBoer reopens Synod by asking Synod and visitors to sing from Psalm 84: 1 & 4. He then reads Psalm 72 from Scripture.

Article 52 - Continuation of Appeal from Mount Nasura re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 49, 68)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8k

A discussion on the grounds presented in the appeal was continued.

Article 53 - Appeal from Kelmscott re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 69)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8w "The church of Kelmscott appeals against Article 93 of the Acts of Synod 2000, dealing with the RCNZ. We consider that this decision is not according to the Word of God and the adopted Church Order, and therefore seek to have it rescinded." (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

A general round of discussions occurred regarding the grounds presented in the appeal.

II. Proposal from Synod Floor:

Proposed that procedurally Synod would have a round regarding the deputies' report before responding to the appeals.

ADOPTED

Article 54 - Deputies' Report Regarding RCNZ

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11e
Churches of New Zealand.

Deputies' report regarding Reformed

Agenda Item 8qq
in RCNZ

Notes from Byford regarding developments

ITEM 8qq DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Received for information only.

Synod held several rounds discussing the report of the deputies.

EVENING SESSION

Friday, 11 July 2003

Article 55 - Re-opening

The chairman reopens Synod by asking all assembled to sing from Psalm 138:1 & 3.

Article 56 - Address from Rev Dr J A Boersema on behalf of the Deputies of the Indonesian Churches (GGRI-NTT)

Rev Dr J A Boersema on behalf of the Deputies of the Indonesian Churches (GGRI-NTT) read an address prepared by Rev Madah Biha. The full text of the address is found in *Appendix 1*.

Article 57 - Response to Rev P Nel of the FRCSA

Br B Veenendaal responded to the address of Rev P Nel of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. The full text of the address is found in *Appendix 1*.

Article 58 - Overture from Albany and West Albany re RCNZ

(Refer Article 72)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8s Albany proposes that Synod accepts that the third party relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA is being dealt with in a faithful manner by RCNZ and that this relationship no longer forms an impediment to establish a sister church relationship with them.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Agenda Item 8dd. The of West Albany proposes that Synod recognises the RCNZ as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ and to offer sister relationship to the RCNZ.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

After several rounds of discussion a number of proposals re RCNZ were tabled. These will be addressed in the morning on Saturday, 12 July 2003..

Article 59 - Deputies' Report South Africa

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11m Supplementary report from Deputies with a letter received from FRCSA (Full text in Appendix)

Agenda Item 11g Deputies' Report re Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (Full text in Appendix)

II. Recommendations:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To instruct deputies to continue to visit alternate synods of the FRCSA.

III. Grounds:

1. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Our visits to South Africa and their visits to us have proven very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

ADOPTED

Article 60 - Synod Adjourns

Rev Veldman invites brothers and sisters in attendance to sing Hymn 63:1 & 2. He then leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until Saturday morning.

MORNING SESSION
Saturday, 12 July 2003

Article 61 - Re-Opening

Elder W Vanderven asks Synod to sing from Psalm 33:1, 2 & 6. He then reads Psalm 33 from Scripture and leads in prayer. All delegates are present.

Article 62 - Byford Appeal 4b regarding Article 93 Synod 2003

(refer Article 48, 49, 52, 53 54, 58)

I. Material:

Agenda Items 8d 8k 8w 11e 8qq 8s 8dd

Synod continued discussion regarding the appeals concerning fraternal relations with the RCNZ.

II. Material:

Agenda Items 8d Appeal 4 - The Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that the *adopted* decision of Article 93, Acts of Synod 2000, is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order. (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

III. Decision Appeal 4

Not to accede to Byford's appeal that the decision of Art 93 Synod 2000 is contrary to Scripture, Confession and Church Order.

IV. Grounds:

1. Byford does not prove that the decision of Synod 2000 Art.93 is against Scripture and confession. Previous synods have noted that the marks of the true church are present in the RCNZ.
2. The decision was made in principle to allow the churches to work towards a greater unity, and thus was church orderly (see Synod 2000 Art.93, Ground 3).
3. Art 30 CO allows for churches to bring matters directly to Synod if they pertain to the churches as a whole.
4. Art.67 of Acts 1985 is intended to discourage the churches from declaring churches true and faithful without giving practical and visible expression to that declaration in the form of an ecclesiastical relationship. Synod 2000 rightly considered the latter part of decision 2, namely, "that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity." The decision of Synod 2000 is in accordance with this intent.
5. Art.74 of Acts 1985 points to the fact that the ultimate aim of a relationship with another church should be sister relations. The decision of Synod 2000 to propose fraternal relations was in line with this ultimate aim.
6. Past synods have not required the RCNZ to break ties with the CRCA but have expressed appreciation for the manner in which the RCNZ use their relationship to admonish their erring sister.

ADOPTED

Article 63 - Clarification by Rev Flinn and Farewell

Rev Flinn was asked to make some clarifications regarding Agenda Item 8qq - "Byford notes regarding developments in RCNZ". These comments were appreciated in clarifying certain matters.

This is the last session of Synod that Rev Flinn will be attending. He addressed synod with words of thanks for the hospitality shown and the opportunity to be in our midst. He also encouraged Synod to continue talking with each other. The chairman in return spoke Christian words of farewell.

Article 64 - Adjournment

After inviting Synod to sing Hymn 46: 1&2 , Rev Huizinga closed in prayer.

The Chairman adjourns Synod to Monday, 14 July 2003 at 9.00am.

MORNING SESSION ***Monday, 14 July 2003***

Article 65 - Re-opening

Chairman reopened Synod by asking Rev vander Jagt to read Scripture and pray. He requested Synod to sing Psalm 48 vs 1 & 3. He then read Ephesians 4:1-16 and led in prayer.

Article 66 - Continuation of Discussion of RCNZ

(refer to Articles 48,49,52,53,54, 58, 67, 68, & 69)

I. Materials

Agenda Items 8d 8k 8w 11e 8qq 8s 8dd

Synod went into recess for 2 hours to allow delegates to prepare proposals in response to the appeals against Art 93 Synod 2000.

Article 67 - Appeal from Rockingham re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Continued from Article 48,62)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8d Appeal of Rockingham against Art 93 of the 2000 Synod to rescind the decision (made in principle) to offer fraternal relations with the RCNZ, and to wait patiently until sister church relations can be established in accordance with the previous decisions of Synod. (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

II. Decisions

Not to accept the appeal to rescind the decision (made in principle) to offer fraternal relations with the RCNZ and to wait patiently until sister church relations can be established in accordance with the previous decisions of Synod.

III. Grounds:

1. With respect to Art.57 CO, Synod decided to mandate deputies "to consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg. Art.57) and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations regarding the establishment of fraternal relations." The churches had the right to

appoint deputies to consider amendments to the Church Order, if that was necessary to enter into fraternal relations. The change required would not have been a substantive one. The guests attending the Lord's Supper would come from a true church, and come with an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct.

2. Art.67 of Acts1985 is intended to discourage the churches from declaring churches true and faithful without giving practical and visible expression to that declaration in the form of an ecclesiastical relationship. Synod 2000 rightly considered the latter part of decision 2, namely, "that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity." The decision of Synod 2000 is in accordance with this intent.
3. With respect to Art.95 of the 1992 Synod it is true that the FRCA moved toward only one relation, but the synod has the right to make an exception if necessary. Also, the 2000 Synod allowed the churches to react to it, before this decision would be confirmed and implemented.
4. While Art.89 of Synod 1998 considered the third party relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA an impediment to establishing official relations with the RCNZ, Synod 2000 rightly considered that the impediment of the third party relationship was addressed in the offered rules for fraternal relations.

ADOPTED

Article 68 - Appeal from Mount Nasura re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 49, 52, 62)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8k Appeal by Mount Nasura against Art.93 of the 2000 Synod. The Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura requests Synod to declare that the decision recorded in Article 93 of Synod 2000 Acts is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions, the Church Order, contradicts previous synod decisions, and places an untenable practical inconsistency on the churches; and is therefore rescinded and declared void. (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

II. Defeated Proposal:

Decision:

To uphold the validity of Mt Nasura's appeal in relation to IIIb and IVa.

Grounds:

1. Re IIIb: Mt Nasura argues that "the proposed fraternal relations as distinguished from sister churches brings one into conflict with Art 57 of the Church Order." This is simple fact, as the churches have agreed in this article that "Members of sister churches shall be admitted [to the Lord's table] ...," while the proposed fraternal relations would allow members of non-sister churches to the Lord's table. That Synod 2000

instructed deputies to "consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg Art 57)" simply proves the point that the decision of Synod 2000 conflicted with the adopted Church Order.

2. Re IVa: Mt Nasura's concern relates to part 3 of the Article 67 decision of Synod 1985, ie, "that our recognition of another Church as being 'true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ' means, among other things that our church members must join that church, and vice versa, in the case that such church is their nearest church, in accordance with Article 28 of the Belgic Confession." Synod 2000 justified its decision re RCNZ with reference to part 2 of the Article 67 decision. Given that the RCNZ have sister relations with the CRCA, its attestations can be directed also to the CRCA – in contravention of part 3 of Article 67.
3. Re Va: Mt Nasura mentions the practical implications of their point in IVa above. It would indeed amount to an inconsistency (towards our own members) that RCNZ guests could attend the Lord's supper in the CRCA and the FRCA on the same day.

DEFEATED

III. Adopted Proposal:

Decision:

Not to uphold the appeal of Mount Nasura: to declare that the decision recorded in Art 93 of the Acts of the 2000 Synod is contrary to Scripture, the confessions, the Church Order, contradicts previous synod decisions, and places an untenable practical inconsistency on the churches; and is therefore rescinded and declared void.

Grounds:

1. Though Mt Nasura quotes from Scripture, it does not clinch its argument that the texts (I.a.) warrant the conclusion that the third party relation between RCNZ & CRCA forms an obstacle toward recognition of the RCNZ as true churches.
2. The texts (I.b.) of Mt Nasura do not clinch their argument that the RCNZ would be wrong in admitting members from the CRCA to its Lord's table. The quote from 1 Corinthians, concerning a local church, is applied in a broader manner by Mt Nasura, but it does not aid their argument, since this letter shows how Paul considers them holy in Christ and enjoins them to show communion at the Lord's table and to be one body, in spite of the problems in the church there (party spirit, lack of discipline, some did not believe in the cardinal teaching of the resurrection, etc). In the letter to the Ephesians Paul also enjoins unity on a church composed of Jews and Gentiles, arguing that there is one body, one faith. Thus its argumentation is not convincing.
3. Re:I.c: the RCNZ have had ongoing discussions about admission to the Lord's Supper. The diversity in their midst means that this matter has been an ongoing discussion. Their struggles have culminated in

greater unity. Even Calvin could not achieve all he wished re church practices in Geneva. The reformed church needs to keep reforming itself. Thus, to claim on this basis that RCNZ does not fully reject pluriformity is not warranted. Also, previous synods have not listed the admission to the Lord's Supper as a matter of concern. Thus it is incorrect to raise it now.

4. Re II: The RCNZ does indeed use its sister relation with CRCA faithfully and is not afraid to admonish its close sister. One cannot therefore claim that they bear responsibility for any neglect by the CRCA. To state that the RCNZ does not maintain the mark of discipline because of its sister relation with the CRCA goes too far. Also, one should not issue the call to separate too quickly. The call to reformation must precede it and be pursued with patience.
5. Re III.a: at the 2000 Synod a number of proposals were on the table. It becomes a matter of which proposal is preferred (the furthest reaching proposal is voted on first). It was thus not incorrect to deal with this proposal. This procedure has often been followed by our assemblies.
6. Re III.b: With respect to Art.57 CO, Synod decided to mandate deputies "to consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg. Art.57) and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations regarding the establishment of fraternal relations." The churches had the right to appoint deputies to consider amendments to the Church Order, if that was necessary to enter into fraternal relations. The change required would not have been a substantive one. The guests attending the Lord's Supper would come from a true church, and come with an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct.
7. Re IV.a. & V.a.: The triangular relations, if cemented, could mean that members of the RCNZ go to the CRCA. Synod 2000 did not acknowledge this matter and address it. Since the decision was made in principle, this Synod must deal with this matter if it implements the decision of Synod 2000.
8. Re IV.b: While Synod 1998 considered the third party relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA an impediment to establishing official relations with the RCNZ, Synod 2000 rightly considered that the impediment of the third party relationship was addressed in the offered rules for fraternal relations.

ADOPTED

IV. Defeated Proposed Amendment:

The following amendment was tabled to amend the above proposal. A decision was made on this amendment prior to adopting the above proposal.

Decision:

Not to uphold the validity of Mt Nasura's appeal in relation to Grounds II b.

Grounds:

1. Re Ib: Mt Nasura's concern here is a denominationalist thinking in the RCNZ as displayed in Art 61 of their CO. By allowing to their Lord's Supper table persons from non-sister churches, the RCNZ inherently recognise these other churches as true – even though they have no relation with them.
2. Mt Nasura argues that this is dishonest before the Lord, since the Lord mandates unity not just at the Lord's table but also ecclesiastically (see Article 28, Belgic Confession; cf Art 93, Acts 1998). This is a principle we all embrace. So we need to grant Mt Nasura's complaint.
3. On the other hand, it needs to be noted that the matter of Lord's Supper admission has not been listed by Synod in the past as a matter of concern with respect to the RCNZ. To raise is now, in objection to the movement made by Synod 2000, is not correct.

DEFEATED

Article 69 - Appeal from Kelmscott re Art 93 Synod 2000

(Refer Article 53)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8w Appeal by Kelmscott against Art.93 of the 2000 Synod. (Full text of appeal is in Appendix 2)

The church of Kelmscott appeals against Article 93 of the *Acts of Synod 2000*, dealing with the RCNZ. We consider that this decision is not according to the Word of God and the adopted Church Order, and therefore seek to have it rescinded.

II. Decisions:

Not to uphold the appeal of Kelmscott that Art 93 of the 2000 Synod is against the Word of God and the Church Order and thus should be rescinded.

III. Grounds:

1. The decision to offer fraternal relations to the RCNZ was made in principle to allow the churches to work towards a greater unity, and thus was church orderly (see Synod 2000 Art.93, Ground 3). Synod 2000 was not lording it over Synod 2003, as this synod has the authority to rescind the decision, amend it, or confirm it.
2. With respect to Art.95 of the 1992 Synod it is true that the FRCA moved toward only one relation, but the synod has the right to make an exception if necessary. Also, the 2000 Synod allowed the churches

- to react to it, before this decision would be confirmed and implemented.
3. While Synod 1998 considered the third party relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA an impediment to establishing official relations with the RCNZ, Synod 2000 rightly considered that the impediment of the third party relationship was addressed in the offered rules for fraternal relations. Art.67 of Acts 1985 is intended to discourage the churches from declaring churches true and faithful without giving practical and visible expression to that declaration in the form of an ecclesiastical relationship. Synod 2000 rightly considered the latter part of decision 2, namely, "that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity." The decision of Synod 2000 is in accordance with this intent.
 4. The triangular relations, if cemented, could mean that members of the RCNZ go to the CRCA. Synod 2000 did not acknowledge this matter and address it. Since the decision was made in principle, this Synod must deal with this matter if it implements the decision of Synod 2000.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Monday, 14 July 2003

Article 70 - Re-opening

The chairman requested Synod to sing Psalm 142 vs 4, 5 & 6.

Article 71 - Response to Address from Indonesian Churches

Rev PKA de Boer on behalf of the Deputies for relations with Sister Churches in Indonesia responded to the address delivered by Rev Dr J A Boersema who spoke on behalf of the Deputies of the Indonesian Churches (GGRI-NTT). The full text of the address is found in *Appendix 1*.

Article 72 - Decisions Regarding Relations with RCNZ

(refer Article 58, 62)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11e The report of deputies in which they recommend:

1. Not to proceed with the decision (in principle) to establish fraternal relations whilst maintaining the implicit recognition of the RCNZ as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. To decide that such a declaration is specific to the situation with the RCNZ for reasons mentioned by deputies in their report and therefore should not set a precedent and does not rescind or re-interpret the decision of Synod 1985, art 67.
3. To wait for the RCNZ to deal with their erring sister, and continue to encourage the RCNZ to strongly admonish the CRCA and to be consequential with them if they do not heed the admonitions.
4. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits if the synodical budget allows,
 - b. To invite the RCNZ to send 1 or 2 delegates to our next synod.
 - c. To authorise two delegates to visit the next synod of the RCNZ.
 - d. To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature or visits.

Agenda Item 8s Albany proposes that Synod accepts that the third party relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA is being dealt with in a faithful manner by RCNZ and that this relationship no longer forms an impediment to establish a sister church relationship with them. Hence Albany request Synod:

1. To recognise the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ
2. To offer sister relationship to the RCNZ according to established rules
3. To thank deputies for the work they have done and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. To convey Synod's decision to the RCNZ
 - b. Continue discussion on matters of concern, in particular their relationship with CRCA and the training for the ministry.
 - c. To authorise two delegates to attend the next Synod of RCNZ and to invite their delegates to attend our next Synod.
 - d. To keep the churches informed about the RCNZ and encourage the churches to

become better acquainted with the RCNZ
by way of literature or visits.

Agenda Item 8dd. The of West Albany proposes the following to synod
for its consideration and decision:

1. To recognise the RCNZ as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To offer sister relationship to the RCNZ according to established rules.
3. To thank deputies for the work they have done and appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to convey Synod's decision to the RCNZ.
 - b. to continue discussion on matters of concern (i.e. the RCNZ's relationship with CRCA and the training for the ministry).
 - c. to authorise two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ and to invite their delegates to attend our next Synod.
 - d. to keep the churches informed about the RCNZ, and to encourage that the churches become better acquainted with the RCNZ by means of literature and visits.

II. Defeated Proposal

1. Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations.
2. To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the Reformed Churches in New Zealand are true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To accept that the third-party relation of the RCNZ with the CRCA is being dealt with in a faithful manner by the RCNZ and that this relation no longer forms an impediment to establish a sister relation with them.
4. As a consequence of the recognition of the RCNZ as true churches to offer sister relations to the RCNZ according to our adopted rules.
5. To appoint deputies with the mandate:
 - a. To convey these decisions and to send the RCNZ our rules for sister relations.
 - b. When the sister relation is mutually accepted, to exercise this relation according to the rules.
 - c. In the discharge of these relations to pay special attention to the subject of third parties, especially their relation with the CRCA and its implications, and to help them where we can.
 - d. To invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send one delegate to the next synod of the RCNZ.

- e. To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature or visits.
- f. To discuss the matter of mutual cooperation with the RCNZ in the matter of theological training.

DEFEATED

III. Adopted Proposal from Synod Floor

Decision:

1. Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations
2. To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ,
3. To ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relation with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy
4. To recognise that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA
5. To assess the situation with respect to this relation at an upcoming synod to see if this remains a difficulty to entering into full sister-church relations or not
6. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To convey these decisions to the RCNZ
 - b. To assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod
 - c. To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows
 - d. To invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ
 - e. To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits

Grounds:

1. From the responses of the churches to the decision of the 2000 Synod and from the appeals of the churches it becomes clear that the offer of fraternal relations does not find general acceptance. The RCNZ have rejected this offer as well.
2. All the reports of the deputies have informed us that the RCNZ has the three marks of the true church and thus the decision in principle should now be confirmed.

3. The triangular relationship with the CRCA continues to be a point of division among the FRCA, although we note that the RCNZ maintain this relationship in a Scriptural manner. In order to build consensus among ourselves to what extent the triangular relations should be an impediment, it is best to take time before we offer sister relations, so that it can be done with unity and joy. Hopefully the RCNZ can accept that desire.

ADOPTED

Article 73 - Indonesian Churches – GGRI and GGRC

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11h Report Deputies' Indonesia, Philippines Churches. Committee Number 4 Report providing recommendations regarding the GGRI (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia and the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin).

II. Decisions:

1. To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue contacts with the GGRC.
3. To thank deputies for their work and to appoint new deputies and give them the following mandate:
 - a. To continue to visit the conference/synods of the GGRI and the GGRC subject to available finance;
 - b. To support the GGRI and GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available.
 - c. To financially support br Pila Njuka (along with his family) to complete his studies at Hamilton, monitor his progress, and prepare for his return to Indonesia. To invite him to Australia on his way back to Indonesia. To ask the Indonesian churches how he could best be utilised in their midst, and to support him in the mean time. Where necessary to support his reintegration into Indonesia and among the churches.
 - d. To monitor and determine the best possibilities to train Indonesian theological students – by either supporting and helping in setting up a college for theological training (for eg., in Kupang) or sending another student overseas to study.
 - e. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise.
 - f. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
 - g. To financially support Rev Yawan Bunda of the GGRC and in a different year Rev Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study

English for three months in Australia. In the case of Rev Yan Pariamalinya this is subject to an expected request from the GGRI deputies. Both requests are subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to the availability of funding from the churches.

- h. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in c,d,f, and g above.

III. Grounds:

1. The GGRI continues to show faithfulness to the Lord as He teaches in His Word and has been upheld by the Reformed Confessions.
2. Seeing that the GGRI and GGRC are sister churches, relations with the one makes contact with the other mandatory. Moreover, these churches have show faithfulness to God's Word and the Reformed confessions in many ways.
3. Deputies need to be appointed to maintain the sister church and contact relations:
 - a. Visiting the conferences and synods have proven to be helpful especially to establish and maintain personal contacts.
 - b. These churches have very little means to build up and hold fast to the reformed faith. They have expressed a lot of gratitude for the support they do receive and were particularly thankful for the seminars, some of which were made possible through personal finances. When visiting conferences and synods such seminars could be organised. If there is a year without these assemblies, such seminars are a good means of keeping contact with the office-bearers and members of these churches.
 - c. In his studies br P Njuka has shown ability to do this work and reports from Hamilton indicate that he will be able to complete it. The Churches of Australia have supported this family and should therefore have the opportunity to see them when the studies have been completed. It is the responsibility of the Indonesian Churches to receive this brother in their midst. Deputies should ask the Indonesian churches how this brother can best help them and support them in this.
 - d. Br P Njuka will DV complete his studies before next synod. The purpose of sending students to study overseas was to make it possible for the Indonesian Churches to eventually set up their own theological training. With br P Njuka's return three trained men (brothers, Y and E Dethan and P Njuka) will be available to the Indonesian churches to set up such a college.
 - e. The Lord calls His churches to be joined together. Such unity in Indonesia of the GGRI and the GGRC would also grant the FRCA the blessing of being fully united with all the churches that now meet in two different bonds.

- f. Regular communication remains very important. These churches do not have the means to sustain them. Previous Synods agreed that a certain person be supported to keep communications possible. Deputies consider it better (without increasing the amount) to spread this support over more than one person.
- g. To support Rev Yawan Bunda in this way is on the request of the Indonesian Churches. The consistory of Rev Yan Pariamalina made this request and deputies directed them to make their request via their deputies. At one time the Dutch sister churches agreed to pay for the cost of training two students in Australia for a three month period if the Australian Churches pay the costs of travel and take care of accommodations. One such student has been here, namely Madah Biha. This proposal includes to ask the Dutch sister churches to support both these students on the same agreed basis. Deputies propose to support these students seeing that they are both very capable, both have some knowledge of English and improved knowledge is very helpful to study reformed literature.
- h. Deputies are to encourage the churches to support this work so that they are enabled to fulfil their mandate.

ADOPTED

Article 74 - Adjournment

After speaking some words on Psalm 133, Rev J Kroeze invited Synod to sing Psalm 133:1&2 and then led in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until Tuesday, 15 July 2003 at 1.30 pm to allow advisory committees time to meet.

AFTERNOON SESSION ***Tuesday, 15 July 2003***

Article 75 - Re-opening

The chairman welcomed all delegates and re-opened Synod. Elder G Reitsema requested all present to sing Psalm 143: 1, 3 & 5. He then read Ecclesiastes 12: 9-14.

Article 76 - Adoption of the Acts

After a brief interruption by a mobile telephone playing a favourite Genevan tune, the Articles 45 through 74 were discussed. A suggestion was made to include in the Acts every appeal with its grounds. Decision deferred.

Article 77 - Letter of greeting from PCEA

(Refer Article 81)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11f Greetings and letter from PCEA

The letter of greeting of the Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Australia was read. The full text can be found in the *Appendix* .

Article 78 - Overture from Mt Nasura re Dr Ward PCEA

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8jj Overture from Mt Nasura asking synod to mandate its deputies for contact with the PCEA to express concern about Dr R S Ward's understanding of Scripture in his book, *Foundations in Genesis – Genesis 1-11 Today* (New Melbourne Press, 1998) as it leaves open the way for unacceptable teachings concerning creation.

II. Defeated Decision

Decision:

Not to accede to the request of Mt Nasura.

Grounds:

The supervision of the doctrine of a Minister of the Word serving in another bond of churches is the responsibility of his session/presbytery. Mt Nasura does not indicate that it has taken this matter to Rev. Ward and his session/presbytery. For the Synod to now adopt Mt Nasura's judgment would be out of order and would be to lord it over others.

DEFEATED

III. Adopted Decision

Decision:

1. Not to accede to the request of Mt Nasura
2. To request deputies to investigate this matter further and to report back to the churches.

Grounds:

The material presented to synod was not sufficient for synod to make a judgement on this matter and therefore needs further investigation.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 15 July 2003

Article 79 - Re-opening of Synod

The chairman opened the evening session by requesting Synod to sing Psalm 1: 1, 2 & 3.

Article 80 - Adoption of the Acts

Decision:

It was decided to include the appeals of the churches regarding Art 93 Synod 2000 in the Appendix of the Acts.

ADOPTED

Articles 45 - 74 are adopted.

Article 81 - Relations with PCEA

(Refer Article 77)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11f Report of Deputies' Relations Other Churches (Presbyterian)
Agenda Item 11f Letter PCEA re decisions Synod Maclean NSW

II. Decisions:

1. To recognise the inconsistent way in which the FRCA has conducted its inter-church relationships with churches the FRCA has not yet recognised as sister churches.
2. To assure the PCEA that the FRCA only engage in discussion regarding church unity with churches that we believe to be true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. On the basis of this assurance, to make a sincere effort to re-engage the PCEA in effective discussions about the matters of concern using the statements of 1998 (Acts of Synod, Art.93), and to elicit from and discuss with them whatever concerns they have regarding the FRCA
4. To send a letter from synod to the PCEA Synod, informing them of these decisions.
5. To thank deputies for their work and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to make a sincere attempt to re-engage the PCEA in discussions, if at all possible via face-to-face meetings;
 - b. to send two delegates to the next synod of the PCEA;
 - c. to assess the PCEA response and come with recommendations to the next synod.

III. Grounds:

1. The Deputies have noted in their report that our approach to the PCEA has been different than with other churches. They note that the FRCA have made declarations about the faithfulness of other churches on the basis of a far less intensive studies of their doctrine and practice; that the FRCA has a sister relationship already for many years with the PCK; that with both the EPCI and the FCS, Synods have previously been clearly moving to intensified relationships; and that in more than one instance Synod has been happy to use a church's standards as means of evaluating the church's doctrine and practice.
2. The FRCA do not make declarations that churches are true and faithful unless they are able to offer sister church relations (Acts of Synod, 1985, Art. 67).
3. The PCEA has given indication that it is willing to enter into discussions with the FRCA. The recent Synod of the PCEA resolved to "direct the Inter-Church Relations Committee to maintain contact with the FRCA deputies, and endeavour to progress the discussions about matters of concern between us."
4. The letter of the PCEA to our synod needs an answer from our synod. Our deputies also ask that this letter receive a direct reply from our synod.

ADOPTED

IV. Defeated Amendment

The following amendment was voted on prior to adopting the decision above.

Replace Ground 2 with the following:

2. The PCEA request for the FRCA to explicitly state that they are recognized as true and faithful churches shows that the PCEA does not understand that such a statement in the FRCA would imply ecclesiastical unity

DEFEATED

V. Defeated Amendment

The following amendment was voted on prior to adopting the decision above.

Replace Ground 3 with the following:

3. Synod 1998 made statements on the points which hinder the FRCA from fulfilling its desire for full ecclesiastical relations. It is the FRCA desire that along with the PCEA these points be examined by testing them according to God's Word.

DEFEATED

Article 82 - Adjournment

Elder J Mulder invited Synod to sing Psalm 27:1 & 6 and then led in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until Wednesday, 15 July 2003 at 9.00am.

MORNING SESSION ***Wednesday, 16 July 2003***

Article 83 - Re-opening

The chairman welcomed all delegates and re-opened Synod. Rev J Poppe requested all present to sing Hymn 36: 2 & 4. He then read 1 Corinthians 2.

Article 84 - Relations with other Churches (Presbyterian)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11f Deputies' report for relations with Presbyterian Churches

Deputies' Recommendation 1

1. To offer a sister church relationship to the EPCI and the RPCI.
2. To work towards a sister church relationship with the FCS.

Grounds with respect to the FCS & EPCI:

1. We have recognised the FCS and the EPCI as faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ where the marks of the true church are present (see Acts of Synod 1983, Art.75; Acts of Synod 1987, Art.82; Acts of Synod 1990, Art.127, 139, 147).
2. No outstanding unresolved issues exist with the EPCI. The matter of pulpit exchanges needs to be discussed with the FCS, but deputies consider that can be done within a sister church relationship.
3. It is common knowledge that a split has occurred within the FCS. Deputies have not been mandated to investigate this in any way. This matter will require deputies' attention to work towards a sister church relationship.
4. Before we reduced our relations of Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact with the FCS and the EPCI we had decided, "to work towards sister relations with those churches with whom we presently have Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact." (see Acts of Synod 1992, Art.95).
5. The decision of our 1994 Synod stipulated that "to break off relations with the EPCI and the FCS can only be done if these churches are found to be unfaithful." (see Acts of Synod 1994, Art.111). These churches have not been found to be unfaithful. This decision, which is binding, should then be kept. Integrity in our inter-church relations is as important as integrity in personal relations (see Joshua 9: 19-20).

6. Our recognition (or confirmation of it) of the EPCI and FCS as true and faithful churches came in 1987. This was before we made the subsequent decision in 1990 to concentrate on churches geographically closer to us. It is thus inappropriate to impose these restrictions on relations entered into before this decision. We must keep our original word and agreement (Psalm 15:4).
7. Since 1994 there has been virtually no contact, as stipulated by our own decision (Acts of Synod 1994, Art.111). Thus we cannot complain about lack of progress with these churches. We decided to “continue contact/relations with the PCEA, FCS, EPCI, and RPCI at a low level (passing on Acts and greetings, etc.) leaving the discussions in abeyance.” For we needed time for ourselves internally to come to a consensus about presbyterian churches.
8. The rules for sister church relations need to be discussed with both bonds, as to their viability.

Grounds with respect to the RPCI:

1. Synod 1992 considered that “the evidence of deputies regarding the marks of the true church, combined with their sentiment that ‘the investigation is finished’, give reason for the FRCA to adopt the recommendation of deputies ‘to recognise the RPCI as true and faithful churches of the Lord,’ and consequently to offer them a sister church relationship.” Also deputies have concluded that no outstanding unresolved issues exist with respect to the RPCI.
2. The requirement that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia (a sister church of the RPCI) needs to be investigated prior to entering into a relationship cannot be sustained. This matter was placed on synod’s table. Yet although synod drew the churches’ attention to this matter, none of the churches has seen fit to request to have the RPCA investigated. (see Acts of Synod 1992, Art.157).
3. Since 1994 there has been virtually no contact, as stipulated by our own decision (Acts of Synod 1994, Art.111). Thus we cannot complain about lack of progress with these churches. We decided to “continue contact/relations with the PCEA, FCS, EPCI, and RPCI at a low level (passing on Acts and greetings, etc.) leaving the discussions in abeyance.” For we needed time for ourselves internally to come to a consensus about presbyterian churches.
4. The rules for sister church relations need to be discussed with the RPCI, as to their viability.

Deputies’ Recommendation 2

1. To offer a fraternal relationship to the EPCI and the RPCI.
2. To work towards a fraternal relationship with the FCS.

Deputies’ Recommendation 3

To phase out contact with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI.

Grounds:

1. A church does not become faithful or unfaithful on the basis of our findings or recognition. The decision to phase out contact is not based on our judgment that these churches are unfaithful (contra Acts of Synod 1994, Art.111; Acts of Synod 2000, Art.63).
2. As a small bond of churches it is important and practical for us to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically or historically closer to us and for whom we have greater responsibility. (see Acts of Synod 1990, Art.58). Since these churches are in the same geographical area as our Dutch sister churches we can allow them to exercise relations with these churches in a meaningful way.
3. We could not come to a decision to enter into sister church relations or fraternal relations with these churches.

II. Decision regarding Recommendation 1:

Recommendation 1 from the deputies was put to the vote.

DEFEATED

III. Decision regarding Recommendation 2:

The chairman ruled that this recommendation is no longer valid in light of the previous decisions made at this Synod. Synod agreed with this ruling.

IV. Amendment to Deputies' Recommendation 3:

Decision:

To suspend contact with the FCS, the EPCI, and the RPCI until we are in a position to do justice to a sister church relationship in view of resources and further clarity is reached in relations close to home.

Grounds:

1. A church does not become faithful or unfaithful on the basis of our findings or recognition. The decision to suspend contact is not based on a judgment that these churches are unfaithful (contra Acts of Synod 1994, Art.111; Acts of Synod 2000, Art.63).
2. As a small bond of churches it is important and practical for us to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches who are geographically or historically closer to us and for whom we have greater responsibility. (see Acts of Synod 1990, Art.58). Since these churches are in the same geographical area as our Dutch sister churches we can allow them to exercise relations with these churches in a meaningful way.
3. We could not come to a decision to enter into sister church relations with these churches.

ADOPTED

Article 85 - Contact with Philippine Churches

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11h
Philippine Churches

Deputies' Report regarding contact with the

II. Decisions:

To thank deputies for their work and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

Concerning the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines:

1. Continue to support these churches in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
2. To visit these churches in an effort to establish better contacts.

Grounds:

1. These churches need support in their ongoing struggles.
2. One can only really learn what is happening among these churches and how they fare by face-to-face contact.
3. These churches no longer receive help from a mission worker sent by the Netherlands.
4. These churches are in closer proximity to us than the Dutch churches.

Concerning the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines:

1. To visit these churches to see if there is still any willingness for contact. If not, to inform them that further contact will be terminated.
2. If there is willingness for contact, support these churches in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.

Grounds:

1. Contact has been established only through one person and it is not sure that his opinion reflects the attitude of all the churches.
2. If these churches are willing to receive it, they need well-considered support.

III. Support for Ramil Sayson

Deputies proposed that the churches consider supporting Ramil Sayson. Synod is advised that Rev Bouwman's contact with Ramil Sayson has ceased. An internet search shows Ramil Sayson is now actively supported by the Elim Evangelical Community in the Netherlands. Consequently, deputies' proposal is deleted.

Article 86 - Changes for Guidelines for Deputies

I. Material

Agenda Item 11h
of Other Churches

Deputies' Report on Guidelines for Support

II. Decision:

To adopt the proposed changes to the Guidelines for Support:

1. There shall be good consultation and as much cooperation as possible with churches in our own bond and sister churches who offer support to the same churches. Such consultation and cooperation should also extend to aid organisations (from within our churches/sister churches) who offer support to these churches. Care should be taken not to duplicate support that may already be given by other organizations.
2. Each request for support must as much as possible be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent as much as possible via these deputies. Our deputies are responsible for proper distribution of funds.
3. Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.
4. Each request for support should be well documented and include
 - i. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - ii. What purpose the project has;
 - iii. What length of time it will take;
 - iv. And the expected goal of the project.
5. Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles
 - i. Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;
 - ii. Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;
 - iii. Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;
 - iv. Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;
 - v. Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;
 - vi. Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;
 - vii. Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported,.
 - viii. Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;
 - ix. And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given.

6. The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.
7. The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.
8. The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.

Grounds:

1. There shall be consultation and as much cooperation as possible between deputies and all others involved in providing support in these churches. This prevents duplication of support; the unequal distribution of support (causing envy, jealousy, etc.); and enables support to be given in a more effective manner.
2. While recognising the difficulties of communication, education, and travel, it is nevertheless important to as much as possible channel support via the deputies of these churches. Since there are difficulties in holding their deputies fully accountable, the onus for accountability must fall on our deputies.

ADOPTED

Article 87 - Letter Rockingham re Deputies' Guidelines for Support of other Churches

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8aa Letter from Rockingham re Deputies' Guidelines. The church of Rockingham interacts with the proposals of Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches in Indonesia and the Philippines regarding their proposed guidelines.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision:

To underline that there should be good communication between mission churches and deputies.

III. Grounds:

Part of guideline 1 states that "There shall be good consultation and as much cooperation as possible with churches in our own bond and sister churches who offer support to the same churches." This prevents duplication of support; the unequal distribution of support (causing envy, jealousy, etc.); and enables support to be given in a more effective manner.

ADOPTED

Article 88 - Training for the Ministry

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8i: Supplementary Statement of Receipts and Payments from Hamilton Theological College

Agenda Item 11d: Deputies' report re Training for the Ministry.

II. Proposed Amendment

The following amendment was voted on.

Decision:

Amend Decision 4 "Request the churches to contribute the proceeds of three full collections per year for our own theological library and theological training".

ADOPTED

III. Decisions:

1. Recognise that establishing our own seminary may be out of reach for the present time but not *to despise the day of small things* (Zech 4:10), and thus to keep this matter in the mandate for deputies, ad art 17, C.O.
2. Recognise that establishing a library needs much time and effort and it would be good to start that sooner rather than later, and thus to leave it in the mandate for deputies.
3. Request the churches to contribute \$40 per communicant member per year for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2004.
4. Request the churches to contribute the proceeds of three full collections per year for our own theological library and theological training.
5. Set aside \$5,500 for the costs of a visit to Australia by Professor Geertsema as a guest lecturer from Hamilton, together with his wife.
6. Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - i. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - ii. continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - iii. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
 - iv. continue to investigate avenues to start up our own theological library and to do so if possible;
 - v. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT);
 - vi. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;

- vii. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
- viii. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" and "Kampen" once every three years;
- ix. to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible.

IV. Grounds:

1. Deputies show that at the present time our own theological training for ministry seems impossible, but one does also need to look to the future in faith. The Lord teaches us not to despise the day of small beginnings (Zech 4:10).
2. Experience teaches that starting a theological library is a massive undertaking and it is unrealistic to start this at the same time as one opens a seminary. Moreover, a theological library might be combined with the one for the training of reformed teachers, and it can have benefits for our own churches.
3. It is good to continue our contributions for the Theological College in Hamilton. They indeed appreciate our support and in a way depend on it.
4. It is good to start with theological training in a small way by collecting funds for a library as well as for theological training in general.

ADOPTED

IV. Proposed Amendment

The following amendment was voted on before the above decision was adopted.

Decision:

Amend Decision 3 to increase the contribution to \$50 per communicant member.

DEFEATED

Article 89 - Mt Nasura Request to change Art 50 of Church Order

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8uu Request from Mt. Nasura to change Art.50 of the Church Order to read as follows, "The Churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall, wherever possible, observe the provisions of the Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the direction of the division in classis."

II. Decision

Not to accede to the request of Mt. Nasura.

III. Grounds

Art.19 of the Church Order applies specifically to the mission situation, and allows precisely what Mt. Nasura requests, without changing the church order.

ADOPTED

Article 90 - Revision of the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents

I. Material:

Agenda Items 11a, 8n, 8ii Synod 2000 has appointed Rev vanRongen to make such alterations to the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents as were required by the formation of classes. Classis South and the church of West Kelmscott ask Synod to implement the changes Rev G van Rongen suggested.

II. Decision:

1. To thank Rev vanRongen for the work done, and discharge him.
2. To accept the Church Order as Rev vanRongen has presented it (2.1 of deputy's report), and have it published as an Appendix to these Acts.
3. Appoint a deputy to have the Church Order published in booklet form to fit in the Book of Praise.
4. To accept the Ecclesiastical Documents as Rev vanRongen has revised them (3.1 of deputy's report), and appoint a deputy to have copies of these Ecclesiastical Documents prepared for use by churches and classes.
5. To have the Rules for Synod as amended by Rev vanRongen (3.3 of deputy's report) printed in these Acts.
6. To retract the decisions of (see 5.1 of deputy's report)
 - a) Synod 1970, Article 47, section 1 and 3
 - b) Synod 1985, Article 81
 - c) Synod 1990, Article 44 (re Article 6 CO)
7. To recognise that the following decisions (see 5.1 of deputy's report) are outdated:
 - a) Synod 1996, Article 27 – the words “(Synod or extra-ordinary Synod)”
 - b) Synod 1998, Article 125-13
 - c) Synod 1985, Article 81
 - d) Various Synod decisions regarding Church visitors.

III. Grounds:

1. Rev vanRongen has carried out his task well.
2. The church of West Kelmscott and Classis South request Synod to act according to the recommendations mentioned in 5.1 and 5.2.
3. The revised Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents should be made available to the churches.
4. The Church Order regulates the examination of students of theology. Now that classes have been formed, the ad hoc decisions of Synod on the point are obsolete.
5. It is pointless to declare the decisions of Item 7 above outdated since these were dated decisions made in a context when classes did not function.

ADOPTED

Article 91 - Kelmscott Proposal to alter the Rules for Synod

I. Material:

Agenda item 8nn Kelmscott proposes that a new Regulation be added instructing the convening church to send agenda material to the delegates.

II. Decision:

To accede to the request of the church of Kelmscott so that

1. the following instruction be inserted between the Regulations 1.3 and 1.4 (with subsequent numbering altered):
1.4 *“As soon as classes have appointed delegates to Synod, forward to each of the delegates and each of the alternates one unbound and unfolded copy of the Provisional Draft Agenda. As further material becomes available, forward one unbound and unfolded copy to each of the delegates and alternates.”*
2. Rule 1.5 (currently 1.4) be altered to read: *“Confidential matters must be sent to delegates and alternates only.”*

III. Grounds:

1. The current Regulations mandate the convening church to send copies of the Provisional Draft Agenda only to the churches. Mail sent to the churches is intended for the churches and not for the delegates.
2. Now that delegates are appointed by classis, the churches should not be responsible to hand over or copy church mail for the benefit of delegates who ‘happen’ to belong to their congregation.
3. Delegates need time to prepare themselves well for Synod, and so should have the relevant material as early as feasible.

4. A correspondence channel between the Convening Church and delegates makes expedient an altered arrangement regarding confidential agenda items.

ADOPTED

Article 92 - Appointment of Deputies

(Refer Art 95)

In Closed Session the Executive presents a draft Appointments paper:

Publication of the Acts

First Clerk

Deputies for Relations with Other Churches

General Convener: Rev C Bouwman

General Secretary: J L van Burgel

All deputies will work under one umbrella. The various deputies will do their own work and are responsible for their own report to Synod. All the deputyships will meet together **at least once per year and (refer Art 95)** as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work. Deputies shall present their final report for interaction and consultation by the full deputyship before sending it to Synod.

The duties of the general secretary are:

- to take care of the central post office box;
- to distribute the mail;
- to act as recording clerk for the combined meetings;
- to be responsible for the website of the FRCA; and
- to acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary to pass it on to the churches.

**Sister Churches - Canada, The Netherlands, Korea, South Africa
(Acts Articles 27, 28, 30, 41, 59)**

Rev C Bouwman

A Breen

A M C Bruning

H J Dekker

Rev W Huizinga (Convener)

G B Veenendaal

Alternate: N. Louw

**Other Churches (Reformed) - Reformed Churches of New Zealand,
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Acts Art 44, 54, 58, 72)**

A Plug

Rev J Poppe

J L van Burgel

Acts of Synod 2003

Rev A van Delden (Convener)
Alternate: H Ballast

Indonesia, Philippines (Acts Art 73, 85)

B Bosveld
J(ohn) Bosveld
Rev P K A de Boer (Convener)
W Geurts
R Huizenga
Rev W van der Jagt
Alternate: P VanDyke

Other Churches (Presbyterian) - PCEA (Acts Art 84)

Rev J Kroeze (Convener)
G Reitsema
Rev A Veldman
J Wielstra
Alternate: D Veltkamp

Deputies for Australian Book of Praise (Acts Articles 22, 26)

W Amoraal
D Pot (Convener)
E(lton) Swarts

Deputies for Training for the Ministry (Acts Article 88)

Rev C Bouwman (Convener)
H Faas
M(urray) Plug
A van Leeuwen
Alternate: R(ichard) Heerema

Deputy to have Church Order and Ecclesiastical Documents Prepared/ Published (Acts Art 90)

J Eikelboom
Advisor: Rev G van Rongen

Nominating Authorities of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Acts Art 101)

T Houweling
W Spijker (Primary Responsibility)

Deputies for Synod Technical Equipment (Acts Art 104)

E 't Hart
A van der Wal

Deputies for Article 48 and 76 of the Church Order

For Classis South:

Rev P K A de Boer

Rev A Veldman

Alternate: Rev J Kroeze

For Classis North:

Rev W Huizinga

Rev W van der Jagt

Alternate: Rev A van Delden

Deputies to investigate 2nd Appeal 'Court' (Acts Art 38)

Rev P K A deBoer

J Eikelboom

Rev W vanderJagt (Convenor)

Advisor: Rev G van Rongen

Deputies for Article 66 of the Church Order - (Days of Prayer)

The Church of Launceston

Deputies for auditing the books for Deputies for Article 17 and 18 of the Church Order

The Church of Mount Nasura

Article 93 - Handling of Appeals that are before Synod.

(Refer Article 14)

Synod decides that the material to be dealt with by Committee 1 should be distributed to all the alternate delegates.

ADOPTED

Synod decides that decision on Item 4 Article 14 be postponed until Synod reconvenes.

ADOPTED

Synod decides that there is to be no interaction with Committee 1 until Synod reconvenes

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 16 July 2003

Article 94 - Re-opening

The chairman asked all to sing Psalm 89: 1 & 3.

Article 95 - Jumbo Meetings for Deputies Church Relations

(Refer Article 92)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11e Deputies for Sister Relations requested yearly 'jumbo' meetings of all deputies.

II. Decision:

We **recommend** that synod insert "at least once per year" in the general mandate for all deputies so that the third sentence reads, *All the deputyships will meet together at least once per year and as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work.*

III. Grounds:

1. The deputies need to keep in touch with each other. Consultation and sharing of information can be done outside of these jumbo meetings, but the jumbo meetings ensures that it is done.
2. The overlap in tasks demands that the various sections of deputies come together regularly.
3. The need for consistency demands that all the deputies keep in contact. Such meetings ensure that.
4. This ensures that deputies do not work totally independently.

ADOPTED

Article 96 - Relations with Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11e Deputies' report re. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Agenda Item 11e Letter from CRCA Dated 29 May 2003 (See Appendix) advising that their Synod of 2003 decided:

1. To concur with the actions taken with regard to the FRCA
2. To note the views of the FRCA with regard to the CRCA:
3. to acknowledge that at this point further dialogue is no longer productive.
4. to take no further action with regard to dialogue with the FRCA at this time

5. to advise the FRCA that should their views change, we would be happy to recommence discussion.

II. Alternative Proposal

Decision:

1. to express disappointment at the response given by the CRCA to the FRCA appeal.
2. not to appoint new deputies for further contact with the CRCA.
3. to encourage our ministers to stay abreast of developments in the CRCA and publish edifying critiques of these developments.

Grounds:

1. Efforts to call the CRCA to return from their liberalizing path have met with no positive response.
2. Official contact with the CRCA is not warranted in such circumstances.
3. Keeping our members aware of what is happening in the CRCA can have beneficial consequences also in CRCA circles.

DEFEATED

III. Deputies' Recommendation:

Decision:

Synod decide that deputies have completed their mandate to send appeals to the CRCA.

Grounds:

It has become clear the appeals are either unheard or rejected by the CRCA, further contact with the CRCA is not warranted.

ADOPTED

Article 97 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 75 - 93 were adopted.

Article 98 - Appointment of Deputies Continued

(Refer Article 92)

Archives and Library of Synods

The Church of Mount Nasura

Inspection of Archives and Library

The Church of Byford

Treasurer of Synod

Ad. Hordyk

J G Versluis - Alternate

Auditors for Synod Treasury

The Church of Kelmscott

Convening church for the next Synod

Material:

Agenda 8cc

Recommendation by Convening Church

Church: West Kelmscott

Place: West Kelmscott

Time: Between July – October 2006

Article 99 - Treasury

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11c

Synod Draft Budget

II. Decision:

To include the proposed Synod Budget 2003 and cost sharing arrangements as part of the material to be used by the committee studying the synod financial papers.

III. Grounds:

The draft budget and cost sharing proposals were received late, but form an essential part of the Treasurer's reports.

ADOPTED

IV. Material:

Agenda Item 8mm

Kelmscott audit Synod Treasury books

Agenda Item 11c Report Synod Treasurer's Financial

Agenda Item 12 Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer

Agenda Item 13 Calculation of the percentage of the churches' share of synod costs.

V. Decisions:

1. To accept the Treasurer's statement of receipts and expenditure for the period 29th February 2000 to 4th March 2003.
2. To thank the Treasurer for the work done and discharge him.
3. To receive the Report of the Auditors for the Synod Treasury (Church of Kelmscott as deputies)
4. To thank deputies for the work done and discharge them.
5. To adopt the Draft budget as amended by Synod.
6. To adopt the Synod Treasurer's recommendation that gifts to host families up to the value of \$50 may be re-imbursed by the Synod Treasury.

7. To include in the Acts both the Treasurer's Report to Synod and the adopted budget.
8. To adopt the cost sharing arrangement proposed by the Synod Treasurer.

ADOPTED

VI. Amendments to the Draft Budget

Reduce Travel Board Meetings to Canada from \$9000 to \$3000

Add Travel to Netherlands \$4000

Add Travel to Philippines \$3000

ADOPTED

Article 100 - Amended Mandate for Deputies Sister Relations

(Refer Article 41)

I. Decision:

To instruct the Deputies for Sister Relations to visit the next Synod of the Dutch Sister Churches with two delegates.

ADOPTED

Article 101 - Nominating Authorities

I. Material:

Agenda Item 11i Nominating Authorities

II. Decision:

1. To thank the deputies that they have completed their mandate and their report has been received.
2. To discharge the present Authorities noting that unlike a Synod the Nominating Authority is a permanent entity.
3. To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961;

ADOPTED

Article 102 - Synod Archives and Library

I. Materials:

Agenda Item 11J Report of the Mt Nasura as deputies for the Synod Archives and Library

Agenda Item 11L Report of the Inspection of the Synod Archives and Library

II. Decisions:

1. To accept the report from the Mt Nasura responsible for the Synod Archives and Library;
2. To purchase another new cabinet to house future archives;
3. To receive gratefully the report of the inspection of the Synod Archives and Library;
4. To thank the Deputies for their work and discharge them.

III. Grounds:

The archives and library were well cared for.

ADOPTED

Article 103 - Auditing of the Books for Deputies for Article 17 & 18

I. Material:

Agenda 11k

II. Decision:

Accept the report from the Mt Nasura re Auditing of the Books for Deputies for Article 17 & 18

ADOPTED

Article 104 - Synod Technical Equipment

I. Decisions:

1. To thank brothers E 'tHart and A van der Wal for the construction of a special sound system and the computer infrastructure for the benefit of synod sessions, for storing and maintaining it and for operating it at this Synod.
2. To expand the mandate of the deputies to include the provision of a network and IT infrastructure for the next Synod.
3. To discharge the brothers and to appoint new deputies to take care of the technical equipment for Synod.

II. Grounds:

1. The brothers have done an admirable job and have served Synod very well.
2. The ability to use email and have access to a printer from all delegates laptops was very well received.

ADOPTED

Article 105 - Rockingham Proposal re Second Clerk

(Refer article 12)

Synod decides to continue with two clerks in the Executive committee

ADOPTED

Article 106 - Goodbye from Foreign Delegates

Rev J Plug (Dutch Sister Churches) speaks words of farewell.

He thanks all for the positive way that the two delegates have been received. They have felt the reality of the bond we have as sister churches. On a personal level he expresses that he felt very much at home. Even the kitchen staff knew how to make his special Milo drink. He wishes God's blessings for all now and in the future.

Rev Nel (FRSA) speaks the following words of farewell.

Mister chairman, brothers delegates, brothers, sisters, children. I want to thank you for inviting a delegate from our churches in SA and for having me here on your synod. Apart from the privilege of a visit for me and my wife to your beautiful country, we were also strengthened by the brotherly love of your churches.

What I saw amongst you was most encouraging. I saw that the Lord was with you and He gave you the wisdom that you prayed for at the beginning of synod. You handled your matters well. Although there were the differences of opinion – and will always be – you did your best to find one another. You had the willingness to stand back where you could. The love of our Lord was visible among you in this way. I remembered the words of Phil 2:1-4 again. Brothers may this love flow over and follow you wherever you are and wherever you meet another, in consistory, on the phone or on the street.

It was just as joyful to see how serious the members, the non-delegates, are about the church and what she does. Look at them, how they are here tonight! Therefore, I'd like also to say a word to them.

I happened to read in *Una Sancta* about your church's early days. May you hold on to the faith of those people, as they themselves held on to that of the Reformation. Just like us, they were also just sinners, but that faith that they believed is what brought you here today, through the grace of God. Children, never take for granted what you are taught in the confessions and by your parents and by your other teachers. In these humanistic times, remember Calvin's words to Sadoletus. The church is there, not for the honour of man, but for the honour of God. In SA we had a hard and long journey to find what you have. Don't compromise it!

May the Lord be with you all.

Article 107 - Adoption of Acts

Synod agrees that the Executive can adopt the final acts from Article 94. The adopted Acts will be put on the Web Site, and sent to Rev van Rongen for use in preparation of the Ecclesiastical documents.

ADOPTED

Article 108 - Web Master

Appoint Br M Pot as Web site assistant under the General Secretary for Relations with Other Churches.

ADOPTED

Article 109 - Adoption of press release

Synod approves the second press release as distributed by the Vice Chairman.

Article 110 - Personal questions

No one has any questions.

Article 111 - Censure according to Article 47 CO

The Chairman states that there is no need for censure in this sitting of Synod.

Article 112 - Closing Address

It seems customary for the chairman to say a few words at the completion of its agenda, and before Synod closes. Now technically, Synod has not yet completed its agenda. And Synod will merely go into recess for some time to allow the Advisory Committee to do its work and present some recommendations to Synod. When will that be? That's difficult to say. Perhaps the committee will finish its work by the time Classis North convenes in October. But that's just a guess. One thing will be very important during this time, and that is the prayers of the members of Synod and the churches. Pray that the Lord may give good wisdom and counsel to the advisory committee that they may be come with good recommendations that will truly serve the Synod and the churches.

Before we go away, I would like to express the appreciation of Synod to the hosting church of Rockingham. Although I might be slightly biased, I think that the organising team have done an exemplary job in the preparation for the Synod. I would like to express thanks to the initial chairman of the Rockingham Synod Committee who is sitting to my left, br. Willem vanderVen. When he was appointed by Classis as a delegate to Synod, he passed the mantle to Rodney Maring who filled the shoes of his predecessor admirably. Br. Maring, will you please express the thanks of the Synod to all the members of your

committee. Of course, you know that your job is not done. As you heard, Synod will sit again in the months to come.

We also want to express our thanks to the sisters of the congregation who have been cooking for us. The meals were five star. There is always the danger of leaving someone out when we express gratitude, but I will limit myself to the three sisters who organised and spent a great deal of time serving us and cleaning up after us. Liz Bosveld, Margaret Postmus and Judith Reitsema, we thank you from the bottom of our stomachs! Please convey our thanks to the other ladies who assisted you.

We should also express appreciation to brothers Eric 'tHart and Alan van der Waal, our electronic experts. As they've done for synod after synod, they've dedicated a great deal of time and energy into setting up the network, the laptops, the printers, the sound equipment. Electronics plays an increasingly greater role at Synods. This is the first synod where we could email each other, and where we could print directly from our laptops at the table. Brs. VanderWal and 'tHart, your work have been a great help to us in doing our work.

We also want to thank Tamala Bosveld, the clerk's assistant. You have taken up a big part of the clerk's work load off his back, and put that load onto your own back. We hope this load offset the load in front of you. We wish you well in the remaining months of your pregnancy. May the Lord give you a good delivery and bless you with a healthy child.

At the beginning of Synod br. Ballast's son became quite ill. We pray that the Lord will spare your son from suffering pain, and give you and your wife the strength to care for this special child.

We could welcome as foreign delegates Rev Dr. Boersema, Rev P. Nel, and Rev J. Plug, and as foreign visitor Rev M. Flinn. We thank the Lord for allowing them to be in our midst, and for the contributions they have made to this assembly.

Brothers, I also thank you for your patience with me and your cooperation in working through the agenda. I also want to thank my fellow officers for the help that they've given, especially the vice-chairman. I've leaned on them heavily.

There were some tense moments in our discussions, especially when it came to interchurch relationships. We love the church of Lord, and we all have a vision of where the church should go in interchurch relations. But we all see as in a mirror dimly. Nevertheless, we have listened to each other, and we've tried to find each other. And in many matters we did, and that was wonderful. We've had to compromise on some things, but I hope and pray and also believe that we have not compromised truth and faithfulness.

I have a habit of using humour to lighten tension, and to keep the atmosphere a little lighter. But in using humour there's always a danger that you offend someone. That happened at least once, which I sincerely regret. If I have unwittingly offended anyone else, please accept my apologies.

At the beginning, and during the course of Synod, we prayed for wisdom from on high. And we began with the confidence that the Lord would provide it as He promised. I doubt that anyone feels that we have displayed perfect wisdom in all our decisions. But we can take heart in the knowledge that the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, sits over this Synod, and He guides, governs and protects His church. All things work for the good of those who love God, and that means also these decisions of Synod will work for the good of God's people. And I'm sure that I speak on behalf of you all when I express the hope and prayer that God may bless the decisions that this Synod has made thus far. May they serve to promote Christ's church gathering work and the glory of Him who alone is worthy to receive all honour and praise, now and forever.

Article 113 - Adjournment

The Vice Chairman, Rev Veldman on behalf of Synod, expresses appreciation for the Chairman's capable leadership in chairing Synod in a brotherly and impartial manner especially with his humour. "A job well done."

He asks those present to sing Hymn 38: 1,2, 3 and 4 and leads in prayer.

The Chairman adjourns the twenty second Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

ACTS OF THE 2003 SYNOD 2nd Session

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

**Rockingham, Western Australia
13 – 16 October 2003**

EVENING SESSION
Monday, 13 October

Article 114 - Re-Opening Evening Session

The vice-chairman, Rev A Veldman, requests all present to Sing Psalm 130:1&2 and then reads Psalm 130 & Psalm 131.

He then speaks the following opening address:

Fellow delegates, brothers and sisters in the audience:

“The chairman has asked me to speak a few words this evening at the reopening of Synod. The Lord allowed us to finish most of the agenda in July of this year. Yet there still are quite a number of appeals that have to be dealt with. At the adjournment of synod in July an advisory committee was set to work to deal with these appeals in preparation for a plenary session of synod. We thank the committee for the work they have done. Looking at the report presented to synod it's clear that many hours of work have gone into this. Now Synod has to deal with this report. As brothers delegated to this synod you might be looking up against this task. And who would not, when considering the material set before us? It's for this reason that also at the beginning of this second session of synod we will turn to the Lord first. We opened Scripture and read Psalm 130 & Psalm 131. In this short opening address I would like to focus in particular on the second psalm we read this evening, Psalm 131.

There is a reason why I have chosen to focus on this psalm in particular. This reason is: at many crucial moments in the history of the church God's people have drawn strength and comfort from this particular psalm. Of course, this applies to many psalms. Yet having done some research it appeared that Psalm 131 is somewhat special in this regard, since it also has been read at many synods before or after an important decision. Let me give you just an example of this.

It was this particular psalm that was sung at the 15th session of the synod of the churches of the Secession in 1854. This synod, which was held in Zwolle, The Netherlands, had to deal with the question where to establish the training for the ministry. After a selection procedure, synod had to make a choice from the three remaining cities: Zwolle, Kampen, and Groningen. Synod realized what vital decision this was also for the future of the churches. Well, before the final vote the chairman of this synod, Rev S. VanVelzen asked the delegates to sing Ps. 131 verse 4 from the bundle of 1773, which basically is the same as Ps. 131 : 3 in the Book of Praise,

*“Hope in the LORD, O Israel;
The just shall in His presence dwell
Trust in His mercy, Him adore
From this time forth and evermore.”*

He then led synod in prayer, where after the final vote was taken, and Kampen was chosen. Why Psalm 131? To understand this, we need to look at this psalm somewhat closer.

Psalm 131 is a psalm of David, yet later on it was included in that small booklet of Songs of Ascents, which the Israelites sung, whenever they traveled to Jerusalem at the time of the three annual feasts.

When looking at the original setting first, then in this psalm David expresses in a very profound way his trust in the Lord. In true humility he renders himself to the Lord. Amidst the temptations and struggles of life David finds rest in and with the Lord, knowing God will provide.

When looking at the later setting, Psalm 131 also being one of the Songs of Ascents, the element of rest with the Lord even deepens. Most likely, when taking the Songs of Ascents in chronological order, Psalm 131 was sung when the pilgrims entered the temple, i.e. the place where the Lord wanted to dwell among His people, and so was near to His people. It was in the temple that the pilgrim sheltered with the Lord in a very realistic way. There he shun from great matters, finding in true humility rest with the Lord.

This aspect of true humility is stressed in particular in the beginning of this psalm. Humility – it should indeed be one of the main characteristics of being a child of the Lord, one of the main characteristics also of being true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, which brings me closer to the context in which I may address you this evening.

By the grace of God as Free Reformed Churches of Australia we are still gathered upon that only true foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone. I like indeed to stress that this is by the grace of God. Now, no one will doubt this. Yet I'm afraid that in this respect true humility is not always found. Yet we have all reasons to be humble. One only has to look at the agenda we have to deal with in this second session of synod. How could come it ever come this far? How come that brothers and sisters in Christ were not able to solve their problems? I say this in an impartial way, looking in both direction. Yes, then the first thing we need to do this evening, is humble ourselves before the Lord, and confess our common guilt. Lord, we need Thy grace. Look upon us in Thy mercy.

It's not for nothing that this evening I read also Psalm 130. The two psalms belong together. Psalm 131 speaks about peace in and with the LORD. Yet this peace is found only in the way of forgiveness of sins, Psalm 130. *"LORD, if Thou would mark iniquities, would could stand?"* Iniquities, also with the bond of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Let us in humbleness confess this without any pride. And then cling to God's mercy, drawing strength from the fact that with the Lord there is indeed abundant redemption.

Brs. Delegates, it is with this humble attitude that we should set ourselves to the task set before us, looking away from ourselves on high to God, trusting

that He will provide; provide also in helping us to make the right decisions pleasing to Him.

Next, when the churches and individual members benefit from decisions, let us never praise ourselves for having done a good job, but in that same humbleness give glory to God, in whose service we are only instruments, and often very weak instruments.

Brs. Delegates, may the Lord help us to work together in this atmosphere, so that peace can be restored within the churches. That is that peace which is ultimately found only in and with the Lord. Yes, it's my sincere prayer that God may bless our work in such a way that this peace is given also to the appellants and those who are appealed against, and this to glory of God and the spiritual well-being of the churches that have delegated us to do this task. May God help us and give us wisdom to fulfill our task for that purpose."

Rev Veldman then led in prayer, after which he asked all present to sing Psalm 131:1-3.

The chairman of Synod Rev vanDelden then addressed synod briefly describing some of the activities of the committee.

Following a roll call the following is noted:

Rev Bouwman is not present, and Br L. vanBurgel is present as his alternate. All other Synod delegates are present.

Article 115 - Procedures for Discussing and Voting on the Appeals

The chairman suggests that the first matter should be the procedures to be followed for discussing and voting on the appeals before Synod.

The advisory committee presents the following proposal:

I. Material:

The proposed ruling (see Art.14 of the Acts) was:

Whereas all members of synod are included in the discussions of these appeals, only those who have not been directly involved in judging these matters before should make a final judgment on these appeals

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision:

1. That members of synod who belong to the FRC Kelmscott, specifically Rev C Bouwman and br H Ballast, who were either directly involved or whose consistory has been directly involved in these matters request their alternates to take their place.

2. That delegates who have been involved in judging these matters at classes be allowed to keep their places and to take part in the discussions, though in a restrained manner.
3. That only those who have not judged these matters previously make the final judgment on these appeals.
4. That all alternate delegates appointed by Classis North be present for the final session of synod.

III. Grounds:

1. Art. 32 states that delegates shall not vote, if they themselves or their churches are directly involved. To have members of synod who belong to the FRC Kelmscott, specifically Rev C Bouwman and br H Ballast, keep their place would mean that in the end we would have fewer delegates taking an active role in the discussions and, importantly, in the voting. In order to keep the number of those able to take part in the discussions and in the voting as high as possible, it is best to ask these members of synod who belong to FRC Kelmscott to send their alternates.
2. We are a small bond of churches and need to use our manpower well. Those who have previously judged these matters can make useful contributions, e.g. in giving background information, pointing to inaccuracies, highlighting details that maybe become forgotten, explaining past procedures used, etc. This experience should be used, not neglected.
3. There is one basic rule of Scripture that needs to be followed, namely, **impartiality** (Deut 1:17; 10:17-18; 16:19; Prov 24:23-26). One aspect of this is that a delegate should not become a (co-)judge of the decisions in which he himself was directly involved, whether he voted in favour of the decision or not.
4. Another aspect of impartiality concerns delegates who are related to the appellants. In our small bond with its numerous inter-relations it would go too far to exclude any related family member from voting. That should be left in the discretion of the delegate concerned.
5. According to this proposal, the first two alternates appointed by Classis North will be needed for sure. The other two alternates may also be needed. For instance, during the discussion and voting on (some) appeals, some members (e.g. ministers) of synod delegated by Classis North may decide to sit as advisors of synod, while their alternates take their place as members of synod.
6. Since these last two alternates may be seated as members of synod to discuss and vote on (some) appeals, they should be present to follow all the discussions.

ADOPTED

Proposed Amendment #1:

Append to item 3: the words "except in doctrinal matters."

DEFEATED

Proposed Amendment #2:

Add Item 5)

Delegates related to appellants /defendants be allowed to participate in the discussion but not in the voting on the matter.

Change ground d) to read:

Another aspect of impartiality concerns delegates who are related to the appellants. In our small bond with its numerous inter-relations it would go too far to exclude any related family member from participating in the discussion.

DEFEATED

Proposed Amendment on Amendment #2:

Add Item 5) Delegates related to appellants /defendants or who are close friends be allowed to participate in the discussion but not in the voting on the matter.

Change ground d) to read:

Another aspect of impartiality concerns delegates who are related or who are close friends to the appellants. In our small bond with its numerous inter-relations it would go too far to exclude any related family member from participating in the discussion.

DEFEATED

Article 116 - Synod Adjourns

Following a discussion on some procedural matters the chairman invites the brothers and sisters in attendance to sing Psalm 133:1&2. He then leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until Tuesday morning.

MORNING SESSION

Tuesday, 14 October 2003

Article 117 - Re-Opening Morning Session

The Chairman reopens Synod. The chairman advises that the church of Albany has extended a call to Rev Holtvluwer of Canada. Br Wielstra asks those present to sing Psalm 25:2 and reads from James 1:19-27. He then leads in prayer.

The chairman welcomes Br A van Leeuwen as alternate delegate and requests him to rise to express agreement with the three forms of unity.

From this point forward Synod continues meeting in closed session.

Article 118 - Procedural Matters

Rev Kroeze volunteers to sit as advisor to Synod as he is unable to vote on any of the appeals following the decision of Synod in Article 115. Br A Hordyk is seated at Synod and rises to express agreement with the three forms of unity.

Rev deBoer requests Synod's advice as to whether he should also sit as advisor and to request that the last alternate to Classis North, Br Veltkamp sit as a delegate to Synod. It is advised that Br Veltkamp would also likely not be able to vote on a number of the matters before Synod.

The minimum number of voting delegates is eleven.

Article 119 - Supplementary Report from the Advisory Committee

I. Material:

The supplementary report from the advisory committee included the following 2 documents:

- a) Procedures for appeals ad article 31, C.O. as adopted by the 2002 General Synod of Zuidhorn in The Netherlands.
- b) A Code of Conduct for Ministers and Church Leaders to prevent cases of sexual abuse.

II. Admissibility:

These two documents are for the information of the delegates and are not part of the Acts of Synod.

ADOPTED

III. Decision:

The interviews with the appellants and the other background documents compiled by the Advisory Committee will be kept in the Synod's archive documents.

IV. Grounds:

- a) The background documentation compiled by the committee is available for the delegates if required during Synod.
- b) The interviews are recorded on a CD and may be required in the future.

ADOPTED

Article 120 - Br & Sr K&R Versluis appeal Classis North Oct 2002 Art 19

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8g

After 3 rounds of discussion, Synod adjourns this matter until the next session.
Continued in Article 132.

Article 121 - Br L Schoof Appeal re Classis Regulations

I. Material:

Agenda item 8j Br L Schoof appeals the decision of Classis North published in Una Sancta Vol 50, Number 2, dated 2 Nov, 2002 and requests Synod to urge classis to reverse the decision: *"It is noted that some of the appellants did not supply sufficient copies of their material, resulting in Classis having to pay the bill for copying. Classis decided that in the future appeals that do not come with sufficient copies for all delegates will be deemed inadmissible."*

II. Admissibility:

The appellant feels aggrieved by the decisions of classis and therefore has the right to be heard by the major assembly.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE.

III. Decision:

To deny the appeal.

IV. Grounds:

Article 31 CO stipulates only that an appellant must lodge an appeal with the major assembly. In former times one copy of the appeal was sufficient. It is only a matter of recent history that there is an ability to reproduce multiple copies of an appeal. If for the benefit of its delegates Classis decides to give copies of the appeals, the cost should be borne by the Classis. It would be unfortunate if an appeal would be denied because of insufficient copies of an appeal. Nevertheless, the classis has the right to establish and amend its own regulations. The complainant is able to raise this matter with his consistory and to recommend the revision of these rules.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

V. Amendment

To delete the words "If for the benefit of its delegates Classis decides to give copies of the appeals, the cost should be borne by the Classis. It would be unfortunate if an appeal would be denied because of insufficient copies of an appeal. Nevertheless,"

DEFEATED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 122 - Br L Schoof Appeal re: Approval of Acts after Classis closed

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8O Br L Schoof "requests Synod to urge Classis North never to approve Acts after Classis has ceased to exist."

II. Admissibility:

The appellant feels aggrieved by the decisions of classis and therefore has the right to be heard by the major assembly.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE.

III. Decision:

To deny the appeal.

IV. Grounds:

It is up to the minor assembly itself to decide whether to allow the officers of Classis to finalise the Acts.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 123 - Br L Schoof Appeal re: Regulations Of Classis North

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8U Br L Schoof appeals Regulations of Classis North.

Following 2 rounds of discussion Synod adjourns until the evening session.

Continued in Article 125.

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 14 October 2003

Article 124 - Re-Opening Evening Session

The Chairman requests delegates to sing from Psalm 24:2 & 3.

Article 125 - Br L Schoof Appeals re: Regulations Of Classis North

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8U Br L Schoof appeals Synod:

1. To advise Classis North to scrutinise their adopted regulations (below) and to bring them into line with the Australian situation and decisions previously made by our synods.

Art 7.7—"Financial aid shall be restricted to theological students of the Canadian Reformed Churches enrolled or are planning to enroll at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches"

Art 2.3—"...A Classis shall ... meet in closed session...when it has to investigate the ...doctrine of persons"

Art 3.1—"[It is the duty of the convening church] (8) weeks prior to the date of Classis to ask the churches a) to submit matters for the agenda at least six weeks prior to the date of the classis; b) to inform, if possible, the convening church in advance that they intend to ask the classis for advice according to Art 41 C.O..."

Art 6.1.2.1—"A copy of the letter of appeal and any accompanying documentation must be given by appellants to a) all parties involved or implicated in the appeal, and b) the convening church"

Art 6.1.2.5—"In dealing with an appeal Classis should consider only the written material that was prepared and submitted in compliance with these Regulations. Classis may seek clarification from either party if it so decides"

2. To declare that Classis North in its adopted regulations is wrong when it stipulates in Article 6 of its Regulations the way of appeal and opens in Article 6.1.2.2 the possibility for the consistory involved to submit a written response to the appeal to Classis.

II. Admissibility:

The appellant feels aggrieved by the decisions of classis and therefore has the right to be heard by the major assembly.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE.

III. Decisions and Grounds:

1. The fact that financial aid is restricted to theological students of Canadian Reformed churches, and that training facility is restricted to

the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and that there is a Church appointed (7.7) to deal with financial aid to students make it evident that a simple error has occurred in the adoption of these rules. They should be (if they have not already been) corrected in line with the guidelines adopted by the FRCA Synods.

2. The examination of a person's doctrine and conduct is rightly a matter of closed session.
3. That appellants must submit appeals and documentation 8 weeks prior to Classis would seem rather excessive. However the minor assembly may establish deadlines for submissions that allow delegates to Classis to be properly prepared to deal with the material presented.
4. The rules of Classis North still allow for churches to ask for advice in accordance with Art 41 CO.
5. It is up to Classis to decide whether and from whom it seeks clarification when dealing with appeals, providing that it deals with the appeal justly and without partiality. Synod sees wisdom if Classis allows both parties in an appeal to clarify their position.
6. Synod observes that the rules of appeal adopted by Classis North are convoluted in comparison with the simplicity of Article 31 of the Church Order, and make it difficult for the average church member to appeal.
7. The church order states that only matters that cannot be completed in the minor assembly are to be dealt with at the major assembly. Thus an appeal to Classis should only be sent once the matter has been fully dealt with at the consistory level. Under the appeal regulations of Classis North (Art 6.1.2.3), the appellant may continue to interact with the consistory and vice versa after the matter has been appealed to the Classis. In this way there is also interaction regarding the appeal before Classis is convened.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 126 - Br&Sr L&MJ Woonings Appeal re Classis North Regulations.

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8EE Part A Br&Sr L&MJ Woonings appeal the regulations of Classis North

Br & Sr L&MJ Woonings appeal the regulations of Classis North regarding appeals and allege that the appeal procedure is unfair and denies equal representation.

They ask Synod to review these decisions of Classis North and judge them with Scriptural and just consideration, so that:

1. the time for lodging an appeal not be shortened a month.

2. the appeal comes to classis without extra input from the consistory
3. the appellants can be present to answer queries in the same way as consistory.
4. the copying of the appeal be at the expense of the churches

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decisions and Grounds:

1. Synod observes that Classis North requires appellants to submit appeals and documentation 8 weeks prior to Classis. This seems rather excessive. However the minor assembly may establish deadlines for submissions that allow delegates to Classis to be properly prepared to deal with the material presented.
2. Synod observes that the rules of appeal adopted by Classis North are convoluted in comparison with the simplicity of Article 31 of the Church Order. Furthermore, the church order states that only matters that cannot be completed in the minor assembly are to be dealt with at the major assembly. Thus an appeal to Classis should only be sent once the matter has been fully dealt with at the consistory level. Under the appeal regulations of Classis North (Art 6.1.2.3), it appears that the appellant may continue to interact with the consistory and vice versa after the matter has been appealed to the Classis. In this way there is also interaction regarding the appeal before Classis is convened.
3. It is up to Classis to decide whether and from whom it seeks clarification when dealing with appeals, providing that it deals with the appeal justly and without partiality. Synod sees wisdom if Classis allows both parties in an appeal to clarify their position if necessary.
4. Article 31 of CO stipulates only that an appellant must lodge an appeal with the major assembly. In former times one copy of the appeal was sufficient. It is only a matter of recent history that there is an ability to reproduce multiple copies of an appeal. If for the benefit of its delegates Classis decides to give copies of the appeals, the cost should be borne by the Classis. Nevertheless, the classis has the right to establish and amend its own regulations. The complainant is able to raise this matter with his consistory and to recommend the revision of these rules.

ADOPTED.

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 127 - Kelmscott appeals classis North April 2003 (Art 17 & 22)

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8V. Kelmscott appeals Classis North April 2003 Art 17 & 22.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

Decisions to be reviewed by Advisory committee.
Continued in Article 134.

Article 128 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 129 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 130 - Synod Adjourns

Br M Bax invites Synod to sing Psalm 51: 4 & 7. He then leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until 9:00am on Wednesday.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 15 October 2003

Article 131 - Re-opening Morning Session

Br T Visser asks Synod to sing Hymn 47:1, 6 & 10. He then leads in prayer. Synod goes into recess until 10:30 am.

Article 132 - Br&Sr K&R Versluis appeal Classis North Oct 2002
Art 19

Continued from Article 120.

I. Material:

Agenda Item 8g

1. Classis North Oct 2002 (Article 19)

1.1. **Appeal:** Br and Sr Versluis appeal classis to judge that Rev Bouwman errs in his preaching and teaching of Lord's Day 51 when intimating that you must forgive those who have sinned against you even though the person who sins does not ask for forgiveness.

1.2. **Classis decides:** When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

1.3. Grounds:

1.3.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt

- 1.3.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:
 - a. It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)
 - b. Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.
- 2. **Synod 2003**
 - 2.1. **Appeal:** Br & Sr K&R Versluis appeal the above decision (art.19) of Classis North of Oct/02.
 - 2.2. **Grounds:**
 - 2.2.1. This decision creates a kind of dualism: with repentance required before forgiveness on the one hand, and no repentance required before forgiveness on the other hand (see grounds for art.19).
 - 2.2.1.1. This dualism is apparently based on 4 texts quoted in art.19 (grounds). None of these texts appear to relate directly to the issue at hand, much less lay a foundation or furnish proof for this dualism (see appendix).
 - 2.2.1.2. God's Word teaches us that we must repent before He will forgive our sins. See Ps. 51, Ps 32, 1 Kg 8:33ff, Lk 15:18-21. From this we learn that God forgives when we are truly repentant. So we must also forgive when those who have sinned against us repent and ask for forgiveness.
 - 2.2.2. This decision is unscriptural and illegitimate as it divorces God's forgiveness from man's forgiveness.
 - 2.2.2.1. The 5th petition says: *and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Mt 6:14-15: for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* This clearly shows the parallel and the connection between God's forgiveness and man's forgiveness. We also quote Calvin on Mt 6:14 & Lk 11:25 – *the reason is that God will not be ready to hear us, unless we also show ourselves to be ready to grant forgiveness to those who have offended us.*
 - 2.2.3. We believe that this doctrine would inevitably flow over into the God-to-man relationship with regard to repentance and forgiveness.
 - 2.2.3.1. This point needs little enlargement in the sense that if man is required to forgive unconditionally, God will soon be said to forgive unconditionally. It can diminish the call for repentance, the seriousness of sin and God's anger and so jeopardise our salvation

which requires a thorough awareness of our sin and a fleeing to Christ (LD 33).

2.2.3.2. History shows that once a deviation from Scripture has been made, it inevitably spreads and grows.

2.2.4. The propagation of this doctrine (see Kelmscott outline, and upheld in part by Classis North 4-5 Oct/02) has created unrest within the churches.

2.2.5. This is evident from the number of appeals, discussions, disagreements and announcements from pulpits and handouts (Kelmscott).

2.2.5.1. This doctrine is unscriptural and illegitimate as it eradicates God's revealed, prescriptive procedure regarding repentance and forgiveness given us in his Word. (The following texts are written out as substantiation – Job 42:7-9; Mt 5:23-24; Lk 17:3-4; Col 2:13; Jas 5:16; Q&A 56, HC; CD V.5,7).

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision:

To uphold the appeal.

III. Grounds:

1. Classis correctly states that forgiveness primarily means to pardon sin, to remove guilt. Indeed, the one principal OT term, **salach**, (cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT, p.699, ad loc) means to lighten by lifting and describes how God lifts the load of guilt from the sinner's shoulders and pardons (cf. Num 14:18-20; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:3; Ps 130:4; Isa 55:7 and Jer 31:34). It is always used of God forgiving man and never of man forgiving a man. The other principal term, **nasa** (ibid, pp.669-672), means to forgive or to pardon and can be done either by God or man (Gen 50:17; Ex 34:6,7; Ps 32:1,5 and Hosea 1:6). It accents the actual taking away (of the burden or guilt). In the NT there are also two principal terms. The first, **aphiemi** (Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The NT, ad loc, pp.125-126; cf. G Kittel, Theological Dictionary Of The NT, Vol I, ad loc.) means to let go, release or remit. It is most commonly used for the cancelling or forgiving of debts. The NT uses this term in this way, both literally and figuratively (cf. Mt 18:27,32; 6:12; Lk 7:41,42). The other term is **charizomai** (ibid, pp.884-885; Kittel, ibid, Vol IX, ad loc), which accents **charis**, the free grace and favor in forgiveness. Forgiveness is given freely in an undeserved manner (Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; Lk 7:42-43). Forgiveness thus indeed focuses on the lifting up, sending away, pardoning or the free remission of debts/ trespasses. The result of forgiveness is freedom from liability (for his sin or wrongdoing).

2. Forgiveness comes at a price. Apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22) for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). The animal sacrifices of the OT attest to this truth. Our Saviour came to fulfil these sacrifices and thus had to die for us (Isaiah 53; 1 Pt 2:21-25; Heb 10:11-18). Forgiveness was purchased at the cost of Christ's life on the cross (Mt 26:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 3:18). This truth comes up repeatedly in our reformed confessions [e.g. LDs 1, 5-6, 15, 16(Q&A40, 44), 21(Q&A56), 51].
3. Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness: "Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offence, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice."¹ Elsewhere, he makes a two-fold distinction concerning the way that offences are forgiven:²
 - a. In one sense, offences are to be forgiven **unconditionally** (apart from repentance and confession). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43, 44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). In this sense, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented. But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14). In this situation where there is no repentance and no desire for reconciliation, the forgiveness is by necessity very limited.
 - b. In another sense, offences are to be forgiven **conditionally** (where there is repentance—Luke 17:3, 4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a brother into favour (Matt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favourably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God. In this sense of forgiveness, we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent. This repentance requires careful investigation, and should be evident with provable signs.
4. It is debatable whether in the light of Scripture Calvin's first description of our forgiveness of others can properly be called "forgiveness." The attitudes and actions which Calvin regards as a form of forgiveness (seeking no revenge, repaying injury with kindness, harbouring no hatred, endeavouring to do every sort of good work) can better be described as

¹ Institutes III.20.45

² Commentary on Matthew 18:21

the necessary attitudes of one who is ready and willing to forgive, and as the necessary actions that promote repentance.

5. The Scriptural texts (Acts 7:60 and Luke 23:34) which Classis quoted to defend the idea of unconditional forgiveness of those who sin against us (that is, forgiveness without repentance or confession) do not teach this. In the first place, neither of these texts deals with the situation of man forgiving man. Rather, they are both prayers asking that God forgive the sins of those who commit them. These prayers must be read in the light of all other Scripture, which clearly teaches that God only grants forgiveness on the condition of repentance and confession. Both Christ and Stephen pray that God may forgive their persecutors or not hold their sin against them. This exemplifies the love which Christians must show to their enemies (Mt 5:44 ff). Such prayers, in the audience of their executors, make a deep impression! Yet forgiveness from God cannot come apart from the personal conviction (cf. Acts 2:37), repentance (cf. Acts 8:22) and confession (cf. 1 John 1:9) and not apart from faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:43). For even after Jesus prayed for forgiveness (because they knew not what they were doing), His apostle Peter, by the Spirit of Jesus, still held these Jews responsible for their crime (cf. Acts 2:23). The Lord answered the prayer of our Saviour when He granted the grace of conversion to many of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:7) some of whom likely participated in demanding Christ's death (cf. Mark 15:11). The Lord answered the prayer of Stephen when he granted the conversion of Saul (cf. Acts 9), who had consented to Stephen's death (cf. Acts 8:1).

These texts, which teach us to love and to pray for our enemies, must be dealt with pastorally as well. People who have undergone enormous trauma, such as those who have been sexually abused, can be pushed down deeper into the pit by such teachings. It usually takes time before victims reach this point of praying for their abusers. We can especially bring them into difficulties, if we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one Christian can sexually abuse the other; if we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way; or if we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt.

6. Normally Scripture speaks of the forgiveness of sins as stated in the second aspect of Calvin's definition. Concerning the forgiveness of sins by man, Jesus taught that a wronged brother should go and tell the brother who wronged him his fault (Mt 18:15-18). If he does not, let witnesses (Deut. 19:15-21) come along so that the matter may be judicially established. Again, the wrong/fault which the witnesses can confirm is addressed. Jesus, in speaking about offences (Lk 17:1-4), repeats this by saying, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents,

forgive him (vs.3). Indeed, we must be prepared to do so seven times in a day (vs 4). In another place (Mt 18:22) Jesus emphasizes this even more by saying we must do so up to seventy times seven! It should be noted that forgiveness does not ignore sin or tolerate it; rather, it is forgiveness of sin (which needs to be acknowledged and repented of). Though it is fashionable to be non-judgmental today (especially in modern counselling and no-fault divorce settlements, for instance), the Bible teaches us that God forgives penitent sinners their shortcomings and trespasses on the basis of the cross of Christ (Acts 2:37-38). The same principle holds true when people forgive each other their wrongs. Guilty consciences (e.g. Ps 38 and Ps 51) must be cleared through confession and forgiveness (James 5:16-18). Therefore according to the primary meaning of forgiveness, it would be wrong to say that forgiveness is demanded even before a sinner repents. Then it would be demanded that the guilt or wrong is sent away or lifted up even when the sinner continues to harden himself in sin! That is wrong. On the other hand, this does not mean that in the mundane problems in life we in love cannot overlook a fault (Prov. 10:12; 19:11; 1 Pet.4:8).

7. It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51). This can well be a process, especially where the hurt has run deeply, as in the cases of sexual abuse.
8. The wrongdoer must confess his sins, repent in his mind and lifestyle, and seek forgiveness from heaven and from the wronged parties on earth (James 5:16; Luke 15:21). If there are consequences to pay, they should do so (cf. Ex.22:1; 2 Sam 12:6 and Prov 6:31), sometimes even beyond the call of duty (e.g. Zaccheus, Luke 19:8; cpr Lev 5:16 and Num 5:5-10). Their consciences, taught by God and his Word, thus compel them to face both heaven and earth in seeking forgiveness. Again, this can involve a process, especially in the cases of perpetrators of sexual abuse. But a sinner must not be allowed to continue in his sins, since that invites only condemnation (1 Cor 5; 6:8-11; Gal 5:19-21; LD 32, Q&A87).
9. Thus the decision of Classis North Oct 2002 has not answered the appellants. For the first model of forgiveness would uphold the sermon of Rev Bouwman on LD 51 (2000) where he says, *Notice: Jesus does not speak about conditions to this forgiveness, as if, for example, the offender must first repent – and as long as he does not repent we need not extend any forgiveness. No, congregation, the Lord is absolute in his language; “if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6:15)...No, beloved, the Lord our God freely forgives*

us our sins, and so we because we have tasted the sweet pleasure of being forgiven-while-we don't-deserve-it are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbour." Indeed, the words *freely forgive* in classis' first model match those in this sermon. Though the sermon does not suggest that faults must be forgotten, it does teach forgiveness of these wrongs even if the wrongdoer hardens himself in sin. The demand for forgiveness is taught unconditionally and in absolute terms. In his sermon on LD 51(1998) Rev Bouwman says, *It may be that our neighbour has hurt us to the very core of our being, ...assaulted my personhood through rape, you name it—and we very much feel that he owes us an apology, ought somehow to pay. But the Lord beloved, would have us know that our debt with Him is much greater still. And God forgives, freely!* In his sermon on LD 51 (2000) he writes, *Exactly because we have tasted something of the infinite extent of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, it is for us show similar mercy to those indebted to us—no matter how undeserving or hardened in sin.* And in a footnote he writes, *Allender, pg. 212, argues, correctly, that the forgiveness we give to the other is not dependent on the offender's repentance.* By stressing the demand for unconditional forgiveness (forgiveness apart from repentance) in the context of what is at best a secondary meaning of forgiveness, Rev Bouwman distorts the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin, but also of us forgiving those who sin against us (cf. Luke 17:3,4). The decision of Classis, which seeks to rectify this is ambiguous and needs further clarification. Thus the decision of Classis North of October 2002 (Art 17 & 19) is overturned and the appeal is upheld.

ADOPTED

IV. Amendment to Ground 9.

Change "The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness" to "For Scripture teaches that repentance is normally necessary."

DEFEATED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 133 - Adoption of Acts

Articles 114 – 130 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 134 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 135 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 136 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 137 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 138 - Dealt with in Closed Session

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 15 October 2003

Article 139 - Re-opening Evening Session

The chairman asks Synod to sing Psalm 27:2&4.

Article 140 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 141 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 142 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 143 - Br&Sr L&MJ Woonings Appeal re Classis North Oct 2001 Art 17-2.5

I. Material

Agenda Item 8EE Appeal C - Classis North Oct 2001 Art 17 (2.5)

1. Classis North October 2001

- 1.1. **Appeal:** The appellant requests to be present at Classis Meetings where their appeal is discussed.
- 1.2. **Decision of Classis:** Not to grant this request
- 1.3. **Grounds:** When appeals are properly sent to those against whom the appeal is made, so that they can respond, this will not be necessary as it has now been formulated in the appeals procedure.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

Not to uphold the appeal

III. Grounds

It is up to Classis to decide whether and from whom it seeks clarification when dealing with appeals, providing that it deals with the appeal justly and without partiality. Synod sees wisdom if Classis allows both parties in an appeal to clarify their position if necessary.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 144 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 145 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 146 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 147 - Synod Adjourns

Rev PKA deBoer invites Synod to sing Psalm 99: 1. He then leads in prayer. The Chairman adjourns Synod until 9:00am on Thursday.

MORNING SESSION
Thursday, 16 October 2003

Article 148 - Re-opening Morning Session

Br A Hordyk asks Synod to sing Psalm 16:1&4. He then reads Psalm 16 and leads in prayer.

Article 149 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 150 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 151 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 152 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 153 - Kelmscott appeals Classis North Oct 02 Articles 17 & 19

I. Material

Agenda Item 8x - FRC Kelmscott appeals Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17&19)

1. Classis North October 2002 Articles 17 & 19

1.1. Decision of Classis: When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

1.2. Grounds:

1.2.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt

1.2.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:

- a) It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)
- b) Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.

2. **Synod 2003**

2.1. **Appeal to Synod 2003:** Request Synod to rule that classis erred in making its dogmatic statement about forgiveness. This statement should not have been made, and may not be binding on the churches.

2.2. **Grounds:**

2.2.1. The focus of the appeal (and hence Article 17) was not God forgiving man's sins, but people forgiving each other. That is clear from the opening line of classis' decision: "When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that *we* must always forgive *our neighbour...*" (emphasis added). In this *inter-personal* context, it is said (Grounds a), "Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt." We do not know of any place in the Bible where *people remove people's guilt*. In fact, are people *able* to remove another person's guilt? Calvin writes: "Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offence, for this belongs to God alone [cf. Isa 43:25]! This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice" (*Institutes*, III.20.46).

2.2.2. According to classis' decision, the first way "in which sin can be forgiven" is this: "it can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present." That is to say (using classis' definition of forgiveness): people can remove another's guilt even when God will not (for there is no repentance). Surely, that is not Scriptural. Imagine the consequences for church discipline if people would remove another's guilt when God does not.

2.2.3. Scriptural evidence for the position that sin "can be freely forgiven" (=pardoned, guilt removed) is sought from Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60. We note that neither of these passages speak of men removing men's guilt. Both are prayers requesting God to "forgive" (Luke 23) and "do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7). Inasmuch as guilt can be removed only through the blood of Jesus Christ (and requires repentance), the unbelieving objects of these two prayers could not receive forgiveness in classis' definition of the term – despite Jesus asking it in the one instance and Stephen in the other. Instead, it seems to us that in these two prayers God is asked not (at this time) to treat the offenders according to what they deserve – a much looser understanding of the term 'forgive' than classis has attached to the word.

Again, it will not do to say that these two prayers reflected the forgiveness (= removal of guilt) present in the hearts of the petitioners. Neither Jesus nor Stephen could have wanted forgiveness (= remove guilt) as long as God did not remove guilt, and God would not remove guilt until there was repentance for their respective sins against the sixth commandment. So these two texts do not support the contention that sin “can be freely forgiven (= remove guilt) when repentance is not (yet) present.”

- 2.2.4. The second way mentioned under Grounds b) reads, “Forgiveness can be withheld when there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps 137:8,9. In this case we may not bear hatred.”

Re Romans 12:17-21: The topic of the Romans 12 passage is not about granting or withholding forgiveness (i.e., by classis’ definition, holding or removing guilt). The topic of the passage is that “we may not bear hatred” in our conduct to an enemy – ever. The passage does not prove the first line of classis’ Grounds b) ii) “Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance,” but instead proves the second line that “we may not bear hatred.” Yet what classis wants (and needs) to prove is that “forgiveness can be withheld when there is no repentance.”

Re Psalm 137:8,9: “Happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes Your little one against the rock!” The word translated as ‘happy’ appears also in Ps 1, where it is translated as “*Blessed* is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...” and Ps 84:5, “*Blessed* is the man whose strength is in You....” The point of the term is that *God* declares a given person *blessed, to be congratulated*.

The reason why God declares blessed the person who dashes Babylon’s children against the rock is because God Himself has a bone to pick with Babylon. Before Ps 137 was written, God had declared through Isaiah that He would destroy His people’s destroyer by means of the Medes and Persians (Is 13:16ff). The author of the psalm (an exile in Babylon, see vs 1) is here asking God (vs 7) to do what God had earlier promised to do, for the Lord should be glorified in His taking vengeance on His enemies – be it that the vengeance occurs through a human party as His instrument. Then the inspired psalmist declares blessed the person(s) whom God uses to execute His vengeance.

The point of the verse in question is not that the human author withholds forgiveness to Babylon; the point of the verse is that the Holy Spirit declares blessed the persons God uses to execute His vengeance.

- 2.2.5. Classis formulated a working definition of forgiveness: “Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt.”

Classis offered no grounds to demonstrate the correctness of this definition. As it is, it is a different working definition than that used in the Heidelberg Catechism. When the Catechism speaks of forgiveness of sins in Lord's Day 21.56, it describes forgiveness as God "no more remember[ing] my sins." The point of the term 'remembering' in the Bible is not that God had forgotten (as in: developed a memory blank) but now suddenly recalls, but rather that now God *goes into action* according to previous commitment (cf. Genesis 8:1; 19:29; 30:22; Ex 2:12; 6:5; Luke 1:72f). With the statement that "God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins," the Christian expresses his certainty that God (for Jesus' sake) will not *act* toward me according to what God had promised to do to sinners.

- 2.2.6. With this decision the churches have made a pronouncement on what forgiveness is when people forgive people ("Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt"). When the churches in the past made dogmatic statements, the statements were the fruit of considerable discussion. One may think of the years of discussion and lengthy debates that preceded the formulation of the Creeds and Confessions. One may think also of the years of debate in the public press that preceded decisions of Synod Burlington 1986 (in the Canadian sister churches) in relation to the doctrine of the church. In the instance of Classis October 2002, a dogmatic pronouncement was made without any preceding (public) debate to speak of. Certainly no consensus has been allowed to develop on the topic. Yet this decision, according to the Church Order, is binding on all the churches within Classis North. Is it fitting to make a binding pronouncement on a matter of doctrine without intense prior debate?

This point becomes the more significant when one reads that Calvin spoke of forgiveness with *two* words (see Point 1 above). Granted, the words of the fathers will not be the last word to be said about forgiveness, but a pronouncement of classis must –if it is to be credible– reflect that classis has taken into account what the giants of church history have said.

- 2.2.7. Kelmscott has said (in *Forgiveness: When Should a Christian Forgive?*, pg 1) that "we are required to forgive even when the offender does not ask for forgiveness," so, for example, when there is no repentance (yet). In making this statement Kelmscott also defined what we understood with the term 'forgive', viz, "forgiveness is that our mind be purified from hatred; to pardon; to love those who deliberately provoke us; lay aside the desire of revenge; to not cease from loving; to repay kindness in place of injury, to wish well to our enemies."

Classis says, “Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt.” Rules of grammar require one to read the phrases ‘pardon sin’ and ‘remove guilt’ in this sentence as essentially synonymous. Whilst for Kelmscott the word ‘forgive’ (according to its working definition) meant that minds be purified from hatred, to love, to lay aside desires of revenge, to repay injury with kindness, for classis the term ‘forgive’ means to remove guilt. Herewith classis has a different working definition for ‘forgiveness’ than Kelmscott has used.

Though classis may certainly modify and/or correct Kelmscott’s working definition of the term ‘forgive’, it is not legitimate to read Kelmscott’s sentences about forgiveness with a different definition in mind than Kelmscott itself has provided. Kelmscott has never said that “we are required to *remove guilt* even when the offender does not ask for forgiveness” (for example, because he has not repented). We strenuously object to having sentiments ascribed to us that we neither said nor intend, let alone believe.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 1

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

In the fifth petition we learn that men can incur debt with respect to fellow man just as we incur debt towards God (cf. Matt 6:12, Luke 11:4). Men can also sin and trespass against fellow man just as they sin and trespass against God (cf. Matt 18:21, Matt 6:14-15, Matt 18:35 [KJV/NKJV]) Inasmuch as the sins that men commit against fellow-men are first and foremost sins against God (Ps 51:4), men are not able to forgive the guilt of these sins. These can only be forgiven by God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf. 1 John 1:7). But to the extent that men can incur debt, and insofar as men can sin and trespass against fellow-men, to the same extent men must forgive fellow-men their debts, sins and trespasses. In this sense, they must no longer hold their guilt against them, but pardon them and be reconciled to them.

III. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 2

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness: *“Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offence, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the*

*remembrance of injustice.*³ Elsewhere, Calvin makes a two-fold distinction concerning the way that offences are forgiven:⁴

In one sense, offences are to be forgiven **unconditionally** (apart from repentance and confession). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43, 44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). In this sense of forgiveness, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented. But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14). In this situation where there is no repentance and no desire for reconciliation, the forgiveness is by necessity very limited.

In another sense, offences are to be forgiven **conditionally** (where there is repentance—Luke 17:3, 4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a brother into favor (Matt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favorably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God. In this sense of forgiveness, we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent. This repentance requires careful investigation, and should be evident with provable signs.

It is debatable whether in the light of Scripture Calvin's first description of our forgiveness of others can properly be called "forgiveness." The attitudes and actions which Calvin regards as a form of forgiveness (seeking no revenge, repaying injury with kindness, harbouring no hatred, endeavouring to do every sort of good work) can better be described as the necessary attitudes of one who is ready and willing to forgive, and as the necessary actions that promote repentance.

IV. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 3

To sustain the appeal.

Grounds

The Scriptural texts (Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60) which Classis quoted to defend the idea of unconditional forgiveness of those who sin against us (that is, forgiveness without repentance or confession) do not teach this. In the first place, neither of these texts deals with the situation of man forgiving man. Rather, they are both prayers asking that God forgive the sins of those who commit them. These prayers must be read in the light of all other Scripture, which clearly teaches that God only grants forgiveness on the condition of repentance and confession. Both Christ and Stephen

³ Institutes III.20.45

⁴ Commentary on Matthew 18:21

pray that God may forgive their persecutors or not hold their sin against them. This exemplifies the love which Christians must show to their enemies (Mt 5:44 ff). Such prayers, in the audience of their executors, make a deep impression! Yet forgiveness from God cannot come apart from the personal conviction (cf. Acts 2:37), repentance (cf. Acts 8:22) and confession (cf. 1 John 1:9) and not apart from faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:43). For even after Jesus prayed for forgiveness (because they knew not what they were doing), His apostle Peter, by the Spirit of Jesus, still held these Jews responsible for their crime (cf. Acts 2:23). The Lord answered the prayer of our Saviour when He granted the grace of conversion to many of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:7) some of whom likely participated in demanding Christ's death (cf. Mark 15:11). The Lord answered the prayer of Stephen when he granted the conversion of Saul (cf. Acts 9), who had consented to Stephen's death (cf. Acts 8:1).

These texts, which teach us to love and to pray for our enemies, must be dealt with pastorally as well. People who have undergone enormous trauma, such as those who have been sexually abused, can be pushed down deeper into the pit by such teachings. It usually takes time before victims reach this point of praying for their abusers. We can especially bring them into difficulties, if we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one Christian can sexually abuse the other; if we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way; or if we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt.

V. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 4

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

The Scriptural norm is that God only forgives sin when there is repentance (cf. Acts 5:31, 8:22; 1 John 1:9). However, Scripture teaches us to forgive those who sin against us if they repent. In Luke 17:3-4 the Lord Jesus instructs, saying, *"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."* This same principle is taught in Matthew 18:15-18. If your brother sins against you, you are not required to just forgive. Christ teaches us to "tell him his fault." If there is a stubborn refusal to repent, a brother is in the end excommunicated from the church. Nothing is said here about forgiving an unrepentant sinner. When Peter asks Jesus how often he should forgive his brother who sins against him, the answer is that forgiveness is in principle unlimited (Mat.18:21-22). At the same time, the following parable makes it very clear that forgiveness

follows a request for forgiveness (Mat.18:23-35, esp. verse 32). Our neighbour needs to repent from his sins, before we can forgive him and be reconciled to him. We are to forgive our neighbour as the Lord forgave us (Col.3:13). Forgiveness requires confession and repentance.

VI. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 5

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

Classis correctly states that forgiveness primarily means to pardon sin, to remove guilt. Indeed, the one principal OT term, **salach**, (cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT*, p.699, ad loc) means to lighten by lifting and describes how God lifts the load of guilt from the sinner's shoulders and pardons (cf. Num 14:18-20; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:3; Ps 130:4; Isa 55:7 and Jer 31:34). It is always used of God forgiving man and never of man forgiving a man. The other principal term, **nasa** (ibid, pp.669-672), means to forgive or to pardon and can be done either by God or man (Gen 50:17; Ex 34:6,7; Ps 32:1,5 and Hosea 1:6). It accents the actual taking away (of the burden or guilt). In the NT there are also two principal terms. The first, **aphiemi** (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The NT*, ad loc, pp.125-126; cf. G Kittel, *Theological Dictionary Of The NT*, Vol I, ad loc.) means to let go, release or remit. It is most commonly used for the cancelling or forgiving of debts. The NT uses this term in this way, both literally and figuratively (cf. Mt 18:27,32; 6:12; Lk 7:41,42). The other term is **charizomai** (ibid, pp.884-885; Kittel, ibid, Vol IX, ad loc), which accents **charis**, the free grace and favor in forgiveness. Forgiveness is given freely in an undeserved manner (Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; Lk 7:42-43). Forgiveness thus indeed focuses on the lifting up, sending away, pardoning or the free remission of debts/ trespasses. The result of forgiveness is freedom from liability (for his sin or wrongdoing).

The Heidelberg Catechism describes the forgiveness of sins in this way: "I believe that God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, nor my sinful nature, against which I have to struggle all my life, but will graciously grant me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never come into condemnation." The phrase "will no more remember my sins" must be read in light of the conclusion "that I may never come into condemnation." That God will no more remember our sins is equated with the removal of the guilt of sin, on account of which we escape the punishment of sin. This is evident from Isaiah 43:25 where God says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins," and from Psalm 79:8,9 where the psalmist pleads "Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!" and "...provide atonement for our sins."

VII. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 6

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

It would appear that Classis should have spent more time in formulating its response to the appeals and so provide a more considered response. On the other hand, intense (public) debate is not required before a major assembly decides an appeal concerning a point of doctrine.

VIII. Decision re: Kelmscott Appeal Ground 7

Not to sustain the appeal.

Grounds

Classis North did not ascribe the sentiments to Rev Bouwman or the consistory of Kelmscott as claimed in the appeal.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 154 - Adoption of the Acts

Articles 131 – 147 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 155 - Kelmscott (Minority) appeals Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17.2 & 19)

I. Material

Agenda Item 800—Kelmscott (Minority) appeals Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17.2 & 19)

1. Classis North of Oct 2002

1.1. Decision of Classis: Articles 17 and article 19

1.1.1. When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

1.2. Grounds:

1.2.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt

1.2.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:

- a) It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)
- b) Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.

2. **Synod 2003:**

- 2.1. **Appeal to Synod:** Scripture nor confessions teach us that we *must* grant forgiveness unconditionally (see LD 21 & 51). Therefore Kelmscott is incorrect in upholding the view that 'forgiving our neighbour unconditionally is conditional to be forgiven by God'.
- 2.2. **Grounds:**
Kelmscott (minority) contend that the issue in Kelmscott has not been resolved by the classical decision. In fact the decision is ambiguous and inadequate for resolving the problem.

II. ADMISSIBILITY

This purports to be an appeal from a minority of Kelmscott's consistory. By definition of the Church Order (Art 31) a submission from consistory needs a majority in favour. Thus technically this appeal should not be classed as one from the FRC Kelmscott, but from individual members.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

III. Decision

To uphold the appeal.

IV. Grounds:

1. Classis correctly states that forgiveness primarily means to pardon sin, to remove guilt. Indeed, the one principal OT term, **salach**, (cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT*, p.699, ad loc) means to lighten by lifting and describes how God lifts the load of guilt from the sinner's shoulders and pardons (cf. Num 14:18-20; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:3; Ps 130:4; Isa 55:7 and Jer 31:34). It is always used of God forgiving man and never of man forgiving a man. The other principal term, **nasa** (ibid, pp.669-672), means to forgive or to pardon and can be done either by God or man (Gen 50:17; Ex 34:6,7; Ps 32:1,5 and Hosea 1:6). It accents the actual taking away (of the burden or guilt). In the NT there are also two principal terms. The first, **aphiemi** (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The NT*, ad loc, pp.125-126; cf. G Kittel, *Theological Dictionary Of The NT*, Vol I, ad loc.) means to let go, release or remit. It is most commonly used for the cancelling or forgiving of debts. The NT uses this term in this way, both literally and figuratively (cf. Mt 18:27,32; 6:12; Lk 7:41,42). The other term is **charizomai** (ibid, pp.884-885; Kittel, ibid, Vol IX, ad loc), which accents **charis**, the free grace and favor in forgiveness. Forgiveness is given freely in an undeserved manner (Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; Lk 7:42-43). Forgiveness thus indeed focuses on the lifting up, sending away, pardoning or the free remission of debts/trespasses. The result of forgiveness is freedom from liability (for his sin or wrongdoing).

2. Forgiveness comes at a price. Apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22) for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). The animal sacrifices of the OT attest to this truth. Our Saviour came to fulfil these sacrifices and thus had to die for us (Isaiah 53; 1 Pt 2:21-25; Heb 10:11-18). Forgiveness was purchased at the cost of Christ's life on the cross (Mt 26:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 3:18). This truth comes up repeatedly in our reformed confessions [e.g. LDs 1, 5-6, 15, 16(Q&A40, 44), 21(Q&A56), 51].
3. Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness: *"Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice."*⁵ Elsewhere, he makes a two-fold distinction concerning the way that offences are forgiven:⁶
 - a. In one sense, offences are to be forgiven **unconditionally** (apart from repentance and confession). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43, 44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). In this sense, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented. But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14). In this situation where there is no repentance and no desire for reconciliation, the forgiveness is by necessity very limited.
 - b. In another sense, offences are to be forgiven **conditionally** (where there is repentance—Luke 17:3, 4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a brother into favor (Matt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favorably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offence is blotted out in the sight of God. In this sense of forgiveness, we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent. This repentance requires careful investigation, and should be evident with provable signs.
4. It is debatable whether in the light of Scripture Calvin's first description of our forgiveness of others can properly be called "forgiveness." The attitudes and actions which Calvin regards as a form of forgiveness (seeking no revenge, repaying injury with kindness, harbouring no hatred, endeavouring to do every sort of good work) can better be

⁵ Institutes III.20.45

⁶ Commentary on Matthew 18:21

described as the necessary attitudes of one who is ready and willing to forgive, and as the necessary actions that promote repentance.

5. The Scriptural texts (Acts 7:60 and Luke 23:34) which Classis quoted to defend the idea of unconditional forgiveness of those who sin against us (that is, forgiveness without repentance or confession) do not teach this. In the first place, neither of these texts deals with the situation of man forgiving man. Rather, they are both prayers asking that God forgive the sins of those who commit them. These prayers must be read in the light of all other Scripture, which clearly teaches that God only grants forgiveness on the condition of repentance and confession. Both Christ and Stephen pray that God may forgive their persecutors or not hold their sin against them. This exemplifies the love which Christians must show to their enemies (Mt 5:44 ff). Such prayers, in the audience of their executors, make a deep impression! Yet forgiveness from God cannot come apart from the personal conviction (cf. Acts 2:37), repentance (cf. Acts 8:22) and confession (cf. 1 John 1:9) and not apart from faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:43). For even after Jesus prayed for forgiveness (because they knew not what they were doing), His apostle Peter, by the Spirit of Jesus, still held these Jews responsible for their crime (cf. Acts 2:23). The Lord answered the prayer of our Saviour when He granted the grace of conversion to many of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:7) some of whom likely participated in demanding Christ's death (cf. Mark 15:11). The Lord answered the prayer of Stephen when he granted the conversion of Saul (cf. Acts 9), who had consented to Stephen's death (cf. Acts 8:1).

These texts, which teach us to love and to pray for our enemies, must be dealt with pastorally as well. People who have undergone enormous trauma, such as those who have been sexually abused, can be pushed down deeper into the pit by such teachings. It usually takes time before victims reach this point of praying for their abusers. We can especially bring them into difficulties, if we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one Christian can sexually abuse the other; if we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way; or if we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt.

6. Normally Scripture speaks of the forgiveness of sins as stated in the second aspect of Calvin's definition. Concerning the forgiveness of sins by man, Jesus taught that a wronged brother should go and tell the brother who wronged him his fault (Mt 18:15-18). If he does not, let witnesses (Deut. 19:15-21) come along so that the matter may be judicially established. Again, the wrong/fault which the witnesses can

confirm is addressed. Jesus, in speaking about offences (Lk 17:1-4), repeats this by saying, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him (vs.3). Indeed, we must be prepared to do so seven times in a day (vs 4). In another place (Mt 18:22) Jesus emphasizes this even more by saying we must do so up to seventy times seven! It should be noted that forgiveness does not ignore sin or tolerate it; rather, it is forgiveness of sin (which needs to be acknowledged and repented of). Though it is fashionable to be non-judgmental today (especially in modern counselling and no-fault divorce settlements, for instance), the Bible teaches us that God forgives penitent sinners their shortcomings and trespasses on the basis of the cross of Christ (Acts 2:37-38). The same principle holds true when people forgive each other their wrongs. Guilty consciences (e.g. Ps 38 and Ps 51) must be cleared through confession and forgiveness (James 5:16-18). Therefore according to the primary meaning of forgiveness, it would be wrong to say that forgiveness is demanded even before a sinner repents. Then it would be demanded that the guilt or wrong is sent away or lifted up even when the sinner continues to harden himself in sin! That is wrong. On the other hand, this does not mean that in the mundane problems in life we in love cannot overlook a fault (Prov. 10:12; 19:11; 1 Pet.4:8).

7. It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must endeavour to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51). This can well be a process, especially where the hurt has run deeply, as in the cases of sexual abuse.
8. The wrongdoer must confess his sins, repent in his mind and lifestyle, and seek forgiveness from heaven and from the wronged parties on earth (James 5:16; Luke 15:21). If there are consequences to pay, they should do so (cf. Ex.22:1; 2 Sam 12:6 and Prov 6:31), sometimes even beyond the call of duty (e.g. Zaccheus, Luke 19:8; cpr Lev 5:16 and Num 5:5-10). Their consciences, taught by God and his Word, thus compel them to face both heaven and earth in seeking forgiveness. Again, this can involve a process, especially in the cases of perpetrators of sexual abuse. But a sinner must not be allowed to continue in his sins, since that invites only condemnation (1 Cor 5; 6:8-11; Gal 5:19-21; LD 32, Q&A87).
9. Thus the decision of Classis North Oct 2002 has not answered the appellants. For the first model of forgiveness would uphold the sermon of Rev Bouwman on LD 51 (2000) where he says, *Notice: Jesus does*

not speak about conditions to this forgiveness, as if, for example, the offender must first repent – and as long as he does not repent we need not extend any forgiveness. No, congregation, the Lord is absolute in his language; “if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6:15)...No, beloved, the Lord our God freely forgives us our sins, and so we because we have tasted the sweet pleasure of being forgiven-while-we don’t-deserve-it are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbor.” Indeed, the words *freely forgive* in classis’ first model match those in this sermon. Though the sermon does not suggest that faults must be forgotten, it does teach forgiveness of these wrongs even if the wrongdoer hardens himself in sin. The demand for forgiveness is taught unconditionally and in absolute terms. In his sermon on LD 51(1998) Rev Bouwman says, *It may be that our neighbour has hurt us to the very core of our being, ...assaulted my personhood through rape, you name it—and we very much feel that he owes us an apology, ought somehow to pay. But the Lord beloved, would have us know that our debt with Him is much greater still. And God forgives, freely!* In his sermon on LD 51 (2000) he writes, *Exactly because we have tasted something of the infinite extent of God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, it is for us show similar mercy to those indebted to us—no matter how undeserving or hardened in sin.* And in a footnote he writes, *Allender, pg. 212, argues, correctly, that the forgiveness we give to the other is not dependent on the offender’s repentance.* By stressing the demand for unconditional forgiveness (forgiveness apart from repentance) in the context of what is at best a secondary meaning of forgiveness, Rev Bouwman distorts the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin, but also of us forgiving those who sin against us (cf. Luke 17:3,4). The decision of Classis, which seeks to rectify this is ambiguous and needs further clarification. Thus the decision of Classis North of October 2002 (Art 17 & 19) is overturned and the appeal is upheld.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 156 - Mt Nasura appeals Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17&19)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8ss FRC Mt Nasura appeals Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17&19)

1. Classis North of Oct 2002

- 1.1. **Classis decides** (Art17 & 19): When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to

all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

1.2. Grounds:

1.2.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt.

1.2.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:

- a) It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)
- b) Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.

2. Synod 2003

2.1. **Appeal:** That the decisions and grounds of Classis North of October 2002 recorded in articles 17 and 19 contain errors.

2.2. Grounds:

2.2.1. Classis' definition of forgiveness, at least in the context of the appeals Classis had before it, does not do justice to Kelmscott's use of the term. Classis judges Rev Bouwman and Kelmscott on the need "to forgive our neighbour" by adding to the meaning of forgiving (our neighbour) that which Rev Bouwman and Kelmscott do not include.

2.2.2. Classis in defining two ways that sin can be forgiven, at best uses confusing language and at worst is contrary to Scripture in that it appears to deny that only Christ's atoning blood can obtain forgiveness of sins.

2.2.3. Classis errs in placing conditions on man forgiving his fellow man, when Scripture and Confession place no such conditions.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

Not to uphold the appeal.

III. Grounds:

1. Re: Grounds 1 of FRC Mt. Nasura's appeal:

- a. Mount Nasura contends that Classis North of Oct. 2002 did not do justice to the explanation of the doctrine of forgiveness by Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott. It should be noted that Classis North of Oct. 2002 decided Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott did not do full justice to what Scriptures say about our forgiveness of others. For they emphasized one aspect of Calvin's two-fold description of man's forgiveness of others, and made it appear to be a full expression of the Christian's duty in

forgiving others. Classis moreover found this aspect of forgiveness not to be the primary meaning, whether in the context of how God or man forgives. In this the classis was correct, for the aspect stressed by Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott (to lay aside the desire of revenge, not to cease to love, and to wish our enemies well) does not concern forgiving in its primary sense of pardoning sin or sending away faults. It rather concerns the necessary attitude to be fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive. Mount Nasura thus overlooks the use of the term **primarily** in this classical decision and also overlooks the fact that after a general definition classis went on to show that there are two ways to forgive, one of which incorporates the explanations of Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott. Thus in the context of the whole decision, this complaint of Mount Nasura falls away.

2. Re: Ground 2 of Mt Nasura's appeal.

- a. Mount Nasura contends the decision of Classis North of Oct. 2002 is confusing at best and contrary to Scripture at worst. However, Mount Nasura reads the decision incorrectly. Classis gave its decision and then gave as the first ground a basic, working definition of our forgiveness of others. In its second ground the classis gave two methods of forgiveness of others. The first method follows the first explanation of Calvin (see below), which Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott adopted. It is less usual. The second method, which the classis seems to favour, incorporates the primary meaning of forgiveness as pardoning iniquity or sending away debts. See the table below.

Decision of Classis North	Rev C Bouwman (CB) + FRCK teach	Outlook of Classis North
<i>Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt</i>	Not stressed by CB+FRCK	Stressed by classis to correct the imbalance of CB+FRCK.
<i>It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present:</i> (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)	Emphasized by CB+FRCK	Taught by classis to correct the imbalance of those who appealed against CB+FRCK.

<i>Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance</i> (Rom 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9). <i>In this case we may not bear hatred.</i>	The first part is alluded to by CB+FRCK. The last part is used strongly by CB+FRCK.	The first part corrects the imbalance of CB+FRCK. The second part corrects those who appeal vs CB+FRCK
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- b. Mount Nasura also contends that this classical decision *appears to deny that only Christ's atoning blood can obtain forgiveness of sins*. In other words, we cannot forgive others, but only God can on the basis of Christ's sacrifice (Mark 2:7, reflecting the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, seems to teach this). However, in the fifth petition we learn that men can incur debt with respect to fellow man just as we incur debt towards God (cf. Matt 6:12, Luke 11:4). Men can also sin and trespass against fellow man just as they sin and trespass against God (cf. Matt 18:21, Matt 6:14-15, Matt 18:35 [KJV/NKJV]) Inasmuch as the sins that men commit against fellowman are first and foremost sins against God (Ps 51:4), men are not able to forgive the guilt of these sins. These can only be forgiven by God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf. 1 John 1:7). But to the extent that men can incur debt, and insofar as men can sin and trespass against fellow-men, to the same extent men must forgive fellow-men their debts, sins and trespasses.⁷ In this sense, they must no longer hold their guilt against them, but pardon them and be reconciled to them. The Bible does indeed teach that we must forgive each other our wrongs, faults, crimes, etc. In the parable of Mt 18:21-33 the servant was expected to forgive, that is, cancel the debt of 100 denarii, of his fellow-servant. Again, in Mt 18:15-20 the wronged party in love and self-denial goes to the wrongdoer. If the offending party listens, you have won your brother over, gained him. That is the aim. The church is even told that *if it forgives the sins of any, they are forgiven; if it retains the sin of any, they are retained* (John 20:23)! The wrongdoer must confess his sins, repent in his mind and lifestyle,

⁷ In their own appeal Mt Nasura quotes Thomas Watson who writes, "*In every breach of the second table there is an offence against God and a trespass against man. So far as it is an offence against God, he only can forgive; but so far as it is a trespass against man, we may forgive. Prov. 19:11 says of man: "it is his glory to pass over a transgression (highlighting is ours)."*"

and seek forgiveness from heaven and from the wronged parties on earth (James 5:16; Luke 15:21). Another aspect to such forgiveness is restitution. If there are consequences to pay, they should do so (cf. Ex. 22:1; 2 Sam 12:6 and Prov 6:31), sometimes even beyond the call of duty (e.g. Zaccheus, Luke 19:8; cpr Lev 5:16 and Num 5:5-10). Their consciences, taught by God and his Word, thus compel them to face both heaven and earth in seeking forgiveness. Again, this can involve a (lengthy and hard) process, especially in the cases of perpetrators of sexual abuse. But a sinner must not be allowed to continue in his sins, since that invites only condemnation (1 Cor 5; 6:8-11; Gal 5:19-21; LD 32, Q&A87).

- c. Since Mount Nasura wrongfully believes that men in no sense can forgive the guilt of sins committed against them, they push too far the distinction between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others. It is true that in some important aspects this distinction is made. Isaiah 55:6-13 teaches this truth emphatically. God is holy and forgives in a much higher way than we can. Also, God paid a price we can never pay. He forgives much more than we can or need to (cf. Mt 18:21-35). Yet at the same time Scripture teaches that our forgiveness of others is to be modelled after the Lord's forgiveness of us. Jesus teaches us in Mt 18:21-35 to forgive our fellow (servant) ***even as*** the King has forgiven us (v.33). Jesus then reverses that order, for emphasis, when He teaches us to pray, *and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors*. Paul commands us, *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do* (Col 3:13). Thus these two are very much interwoven.

3. Re: Ground 3 of Mount Nasura's appeal.

- a. Mount Nasura is wrong when it states that Scripture places no condition on man forgiving fellow man. One must be careful with words and definitions here. Although we must learn to adopt the attitude that we are *"fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbour"* even though he has not (yet) repented. On those occasions we must learn to lay aside the desire for revenge, must learn to love those who harm us, even our enemies. Scripture teaches that the actual forgiveness, in the central sense of sending away sin or pardoning

guilt, comes when we forgive our neighbour who confesses his guilt. *"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him"* (Luke 17:3,4).

- b. Mount Nasura, following Rev Bouwman and FRC Kelmscott, use the two texts (Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60) in the decision of classis to insist on unconditional forgiveness. Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness: *Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice.*⁸ Elsewhere, he makes a two-fold distinction concerning the way that offences are forgiven:⁹

- i. In one sense, offences are to be forgiven unconditionally (apart from repentance and confession). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43, 44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), and endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). In this sense of forgiveness, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented. But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14). In this situation, where there is no repentance and no desire for reconciliation, the forgiveness is by necessity very limited.

- ii. In another sense, offenses are to be forgiven conditionally (where there is repentance—Luke 17:3,4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a brother into favor (Matt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favorably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offense is blotted out in the sight of God. In this sense of forgiveness, we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent. This repentance requires careful investigation, and should be evident with provable signs.

⁸ Institutes III.20.45

⁹ Commentary on Matthew 18:21

- c. These texts (Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60) do not teach unconditional forgiveness. In the first place, neither of these texts deals with the situation of man forgiving man. Rather, they are both **prayers** asking that **God** forgive the sins of those who commit them. These prayers must be read in the light of all other Scripture, which clearly teaches that God only grants forgiveness when there is repentance and confession. Both Christ and Stephen pray that God may forgive their persecutors or not hold their sin against them. This exemplifies the love which Christians must show to their enemies (Mt 5:44 ff). Such prayers, in the audience of their executors, make a deep impression! Yet forgiveness from God cannot come apart from the personal conviction (cf. Acts 2:37), repentance (cf. Acts 8:22), confession (cf. 1 John 1:9) and not apart from faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:43). For even after Jesus prayed for forgiveness (*because they knew not what they were doing- cf. Acts 3:17; 1 Cor 2:8*), his apostle Peter, by the Spirit of Jesus, still held these Jews responsible for their crime (cf. Acts 2:23). The Lord answered the prayer of our Saviour when He granted the grace of conversion to many of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:7) some of whom likely participated in demanding Christ's death (cf. Mark 15:11). The Lord answered the prayer of Stephen when he granted the conversion of Saul (cf. Acts 9), who had consented to Stephen's death (cf. Acts 8:1). So prayers became reality, for sinners were forgiven by the grace of God.

These texts, which teach us to love and to pray for our enemies, must be dealt with pastorally as well. People who have undergone enormous trauma, such as those who have been sexually abused, can be pushed down deeper into the pit by such teachings. It usually takes time before victims reach this point of praying for their abusers. We can especially bring them into difficulties, if we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one Christian can sexually abuse the other; if we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way; or if we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 157 - Br&Sr CJ&IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2001 (Art 16.2)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8ww — Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2001 Art 16.2

1. Classis North Oct/2001

1.1. **Appeal:** Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl request classis to judge their objections to the LD 21 sermon, in which Rev Bouwman says that the answer (whether Christ is present in a particular church) *to that question may not be made by any single one of us individually, simply because we're too limited, too sinful, for that*, errs in doctrine because we are all to decide where the true church is.

1.2. **Decision of Classis North Oct 2001 (Art 16.2):** To acknowledge that Rev Bouwman could have been clearer, but that he does not teach here what Br & sr CJ & IK Byl are suggesting.

1.3. Grounds:

1.3.1. In the paragraph before the words that Br & sr CJ & IK Byl object to Rev Bouwman admonishes everyone (individually) to be joined with the church where ever it is truly being gathered together (Art.28, B.C.)

1.3.2. The paragraph in which Br & sr CJ & IK Byl find their objections begins by stating that Christ's church gathering work is found in many places. He then goes on to say that individual members of the true church may not determine on their own whether another church is true, but recognition of sister churches is to be done together as members of the churches through their office-bearers and ecclesiastical assemblies.

1.3.3. Although the distinction made in grounds one and two above could have been made more clear in the sermon, it is there.

2. Synod 2003:

2.1. **Appeal:** Br & sr CJ & IK Byl claim classis deviates inasmuch as Rev Bouwman's sermon speaks not about forming sister churches, but about recognizing true churches. The relevant portion of the sermon is as follows:

You will say: those who have gone out from us join other assemblies of believers in town where Christ is also present and His voice is faithfully heard. Good and well. But again, beloved, what is the will of the Lord in the matter? This: where Christ is gathering His people together in multiple places in one town, these churches need to work together, need to recognize from each other that the Lord has worked one faith in one Savior in these

various assemblies. Christ's church in Kelmscott sees that work of the Lord in Armadale, in Byford, in Mt Nasura. But we do not see that work occurring in Gosnells or in Bull Creek or in Bicton. Hear me well: I do not say that there are no sheep of the Lord in those suburbs, or that churches in these suburbs have no true believers among their members. But when you speak of 'church' you speak of Christ – remember? – and that's the question: is Christ present there, i.e. is His voice heard? And the answer to that question may not be made by any single one of us individually, simply because we're too limited, too sinful, for that. Here the word of Solomon is applicable: "in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov 11:14). It's the congregation together, or even the bond of churches, and not you as an individual member, who may decide whether the assembly in the next suburb rightly calls itself a church of Christ, is the church where Christ calls you to be. Here we need to be very wary that we do not adopt for ourselves the individualism that is so rampant in our times.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

To uphold the appeal.

III. Grounds:

- a. The appeal is upheld in that the sermon says that individuals on their own cannot recognize churches as true or false *because we're too limited, too sinful for that*. This is wrong reasoning. Our Belgic Confession teaches that *we all who believe with the heart and confess with the mouth...ought to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what is the true church* (Arts 1 and 29). Our migrant fathers had to, and so must we be able to, whenever necessary. After all, *these two churches (true over against false) are easily recognized and distinguished from each other* (art. 29, B.C.).
- b. However, this sermon, in the section concerned, clearly addressed issues of joining other churches in the local area (the references to suburbs makes this clear). In such a situation the decision of one member to join a certain church, since it is recognized as a true church, should have consequences for all our members and churches in that area. Seeing it concerns more people, such decisions should then be taken communally, not individually. A minister thus has the duty and right to warn against 'church-shopping,' seeing that individualism, also in choice of churches, runs rampant today.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 158 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 159 - Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8ww Point One: Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17)

1. Classis Oct 2002 Art 17:

- 1.1. **Appeal:** Consistory has wronged CJ & IK Byl by claiming that the doctrinal error Classis Legana, October 26 – 27, 2001 found in Rev Bouwman's sermon on Luke 15 has been withdrawn, while in fact, this doctrine is still being propagated.
- 1.2. **Grounds:** Br and Sr. Byl base their appeal on *earlier sermons, and statements in letters from consistory as well as some of Rev Bouwman's recent sermons and articles in "Una Sancta."*
- 1.3. **Decision of Classis Oct 2002:** Since previous classis decisions regarding the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins lacked precision it has led to confusion as to whether they have been implemented or not.
- 1.4. **Grounds:**
 - 1.4.1. Classis October 2001 only judged Rev Bouwman's sermon on Luke 15 to contain *unscriptural doctrine concerning the forgiveness of sins by man* on the grounds that: *The error here is that the returning in the parable is a sign of repentance, and so the parable teaches that we must rejoice when a sinner returns in repentance.* Classis October 2001 did not deal with the doctrinal question whether the Lord requires us to forgive when the offender does not ask for forgiveness.
 - 1.4.2. Classis April 2002 decided that it could not *come to a conclusion on the appeal* regarding Rev Bouwman's teaching in the Lord's Day 51 sermon on the grounds that *the consistory of Kelmscott in its statement give an unclear definition of forgiveness which makes it appear that they require beyond what is confessed from Scripture in Lord's Day 51.*

2. Synod 2003:

Appeal: The appellants appeal Classis' decision (grounds b) because a decision should have been made. Also, they question whether the stated *unclear definition* is indeed beyond Scripture or not.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

Synod judges that no case needs to be answered, since the appellants misread the decision of Classis North of Oct 2002, which decision actually agrees that a more precise definition of forgiveness is needed.

III. Grounds:

- a. After stating that an imprecise definition of the forgiveness of sins caused confusion, confusion whether the previous decision had been implemented, the classis then went on to state what was considered a more precise definition. Obviously, this definition was to remove the confusion whether the previous decision of classis about the sermon on Luke 15 was implemented or not.
- b. Thus the classis did make a decision and took a stance as the appellants ask for. The twofold definition of the forgiveness of sins was meant to answer the appellants.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North and Br T Visser did not vote.

Article 160 - Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8ww Point Two

1. Classis Oct 2002 Art 17:

- 1.1. **Appeal:** That Rev Bouwman and consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott continues to uphold doctrines contrary to Scripture that must be withdrawn.
- 1.2. **Decision of Classis:** When Rev Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

1.3. Grounds:

- 1.3.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt
- 1.3.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:
 - (1) It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)
 - (2) Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.

2. Synod 2003:

- 2.1. **Appeal:** Though the appellants can agree with some of the Scripture quotes, they feel the matter goes deeper. They claim that Rev Bouwman continues to stress that victims of crime must forgive, no matter whether the wrongdoer repents or not. Thus the wrong doctrine in the sermon on Luke 15 is being continued, even though the sermon was retracted. The decision of Classis North/Oct 2002 does not settle this matter but continues the confusion.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

To uphold the appeal.

III. Grounds

1. Classis correctly states that forgiveness primarily means to pardon sin, to remove guilt. Indeed, the one principal OT term, **salach**, (cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT*, p.699, ad loc) means to lighten by lifting and describes how God lifts the load of guilt from the sinner's shoulders and pardons (cf. Num 14:18-20; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:3; Ps 130:4; Isa 55:7 and Jer 31:34). It is always used of God forgiving man and never of man forgiving a man. The other principal term, **nasa** (ibid, pp.669-672), means to forgive or to pardon and can be done either by God or man (Gen 50:17; Ex 34:6,7; Ps 32:1,5 and Hosea 1:6). It accents the actual taking away (of the burden or guilt). In the NT there are also two principal terms. The first, **aphiemi** (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The NT*, ad loc, pp.125-126; cf. G Kittel, *Theological Dictionary Of The NT*, Vol I, ad loc.) means to let go, release or remit. It is most commonly used for the cancelling or forgiving of debts. The NT uses this term in this way, both literally and figuratively (cf. Mt 18:27,32; 6:12; Lk 7:41,42). The other term is **charizomai** (ibid, pp.884-885; Kittel, ibid, Vol IX, ad loc), which accents **charis**, the free grace and favor in forgiveness. Forgiveness is given freely in an undeserved manner (Eph 4:32; Col 2:13; 3:13; Lk 7:42-43). Forgiveness thus indeed focuses on the lifting up, sending away, pardoning or the free remission of debts/trespasses. The result of forgiveness is freedom from liability (for his sin or wrongdoing).
2. Forgiveness comes at a price. Apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22) for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). The animal sacrifices of the OT attest to this truth. Our Saviour would come to fulfill these sacrifices and thus had to die for us (Isaiah 53; 1 Pt 2:21-25; Heb 10:11-18). Forgiveness was purchased at the cost of Christ's life on the cross (Mt 26:28; Mk 10:45; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 3:18). This truth comes up repeatedly in our reformed confessions [e.g. LDs 1, 5-6, 15, 16(Q&A 40, 44), 21(Q&A 56), 51].

3. Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness: Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice”¹⁰ Elsewhere, he makes a two-fold distinction concerning the way that offences are forgiven:¹¹
 - a. In one sense, Calvin says that offences are to be forgiven **unconditionally** (apart from repentance and confession). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), repaying injury with kindness (Rom 12:17), harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43, 44), and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good work to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). In this sense of forgiveness, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented. But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14). In this situation where there is no repentance and no desire for reconciliation, the forgiveness is by necessity very limited.
 - b. In another sense, Calvin says that offenses are to be forgiven **conditionally** (where there is repentance—Luke 17:3, 4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a **brother** into favor (Matt 18:15), forgetting the injury and thinking favorably of him, being convinced that the remembrance of his offense is blotted out in the sight of God. In this sense of forgiveness, *we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent*. This repentance requires careful investigation, and should be evident with provable signs.
4. It is debatable whether in the light of Scripture Calvin’s first description of our forgiveness of others can properly be called “forgiveness.” The attitudes and actions which Calvin regards as a form of forgiveness (seeking no revenge, repaying injury with kindness, harbouring no hatred, endeavouring to do every sort of good work) can better be described as the necessary attitudes of one who is ready and willing to forgive, and as the necessary actions that promote repentance.
5. The Scriptural texts which Classis quoted (Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60) to defend the idea of unconditional forgiveness of those who sin against us (that is, forgiveness without repentance or confession) do not teach this. In the first place, neither of these texts deals with the

¹⁰ Institutes, III,20,45

¹¹ Commentary on Matthew 18:21

situation of man forgiving man. Rather, they are both prayers asking that God forgive the sins of those who commit them. These prayers must be read in the light of all other Scripture, which clearly teaches that God only grants forgiveness on the condition of repentance and confession. Both Christ and Stephen pray that God may forgive their persecutors or not hold their sin against them. This exemplifies the love which Christians must show to their enemies (Mt 5:44 ff). Such prayers, in the audience of their executors, make a deep impression! Yet forgiveness from God cannot come apart from the personal conviction (cf. Acts 2:37), repentance (cf. Acts 8:22) and confession (cf. 1 John 1:9) and not apart from faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:43). For even after Jesus prayed for forgiveness (*because they knew not what they were doing*), His apostle Peter, by the Spirit of Jesus, still held these Jews responsible for their crime (cf. Acts 2:23). The Lord answered the prayer of our Saviour when He granted the grace of conversion to many of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:37-41, Acts 6:7) some of whom likely participated in demanding Christ's death (cf. Mark 15:11). The Lord answered the prayer of Stephen when he granted the conversion of Saul (cf. Acts 9) who had consented to Stephen's death (cf. Acts 8:1).

These texts, which teach us to love and to pray for our enemies, must be dealt with pastorally as well. People who have undergone enormous trauma, such as those who have been sexually abused, can be pushed down deeper into the pit by such teachings. It usually takes time before victims reach this point of praying for their abusers. We can especially bring them into difficulties, if we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one Christian can sexually abuse the other; if we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way; or if we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt.

6. Normally Scripture speaks of the forgiveness of sins as stated in the second definition. Concerning the forgiveness of sins by man, Jesus taught that a wronged brother should go and tell the brother who wronged him his fault (Mt 18:15-18). If he does not, let witnesses (Deut. 19:15-21) come along so that the matter may be judicially established. Again, the wrong/fault which the witnesses can confirm is addressed. Jesus, in speaking about offenses (Lk 17:1-4), repeats this by saying, if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him (vs.3). Indeed, we must be prepared to do so seven times in a day (vs 4). In another place (Mt 18:22) Jesus emphasizes this even more by saying we must do so up to seventy times seven! It should be noted that forgiveness does not ignore sin or

tolerate it; rather, it is forgiveness of sin (which needs to be acknowledged and repented of). Though it is fashionable to be non-judgmental today (especially in modern counseling and no-fault divorce settlements, for instance), the Bible teaches us that God forgives penitent sinners their shortcomings and trespasses on the basis of the cross of Christ (Acts 2:37-38). The same principle holds true when people forgive each other their wrongs. Guilty consciences (e.g. Ps 38 and Ps 51) must be cleared through confession and forgiveness (James 5:16-18). To say therefore that forgiveness is demanded even before a sinner repents is incorrect. It would demand that the guilt or wrong is sent away or lifted up even when the sinner continues to harden himself in sin! That is wrong. The actual forgiveness (lifting up or sending away of the wrong or the guilt) comes when there is repentance along with the request for forgiveness. The offended party then forgives, that is, sends away the wrong and lifts up the burden.

7. It is indeed correct to teach that Christians, in preparing to forgive others their wrongs, must learn to put away the desire of revenge as well as feelings of hatred and self-pity, must learn not to repay evil with evil, but must learn to win the brother who is in the wrong, must pray for him, be willing to help him, and be fully prepared in his heart to forgive the wrong, even well before the wrongdoer acknowledges his fault (Rom 12:9-21; 13:8-10; LD 40; LD 51). This can well be a process, especially where the hurt has run deeply, as in the cases of sexual abuse.
8. The wrongdoer must confess his sins, repent in his mind and lifestyle, and seek forgiveness from heaven and from the wronged parties on earth (James 5:16; Luke 15:21). If there are consequences to pay, they should do so (cf. Ex.22:1; 2 Sam 12:6 and Prov 6:31), sometimes even beyond the call of duty (e.g. Zaccheus, Luke 19:8; cpr Lev 5:16 and Num 5:5-10). Their consciences, taught by God and his Word, thus compel them to face both heaven and earth in seeking forgiveness. Again, this can involve a process, especially in the cases of perpetrators of sexual abuse. But a sinner must not be allowed to continue in his sins, since that invites only condemnation (1 Cor 5; 6:8-11; Gal 5:19-21; LD 32, Q&A87).
9. Thus the decision of Classis North Oct 2002 has not answered the appellants. For the first model of forgiveness would uphold the sermon of Rev Bouwman on LD 51 (2000) where he says, *Notice: Jesus does not speak about conditions to this forgiveness, as if, for example, the offender must first repent – and as long as he does not repent we need not extend any forgiveness. No, congregation, the Lord is absolute in his language; “if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mt 6:15)...No,*

beloved, the Lord our God freely forgives us our sins, and so we because we have tasted the sweet pleasure of being forgiven-while-we don't-deserve-it are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbor." Indeed, the words *freely forgive* in classis' first model match those in this sermon. Though the sermon does not suggest that faults must be forgotten, it does teach forgiveness of these wrongs even if the wrongdoer hardens himself in sin. The demand for forgiveness is taught unconditionally and in absolute terms. In his sermon on LD 51(1998) Rev Bouwman says, *It may be that our neighbour has hurt us to the very core of our being, ...assaulted my personhood through rape, you name it—and we very much feel that he owes us an apology, ought somehow to pay. But the Lord beloved, would have us know that our debt with Him is much greater still. And God forgives, freely!* In his sermon on LD 51 (2000) he writes, *Exactly because we have tasted something of the infinite extent of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, it is for us show similar mercy to those indebted to us—no matter how undeserving or hardened in sin.* And in a footnote he writes, *Allender, pg. 212, argues, correctly, that the forgiveness we give to the other is not dependent on the offender's repentance.* By stressing the demand for unconditional forgiveness (forgiveness apart from repentance) in the context of what is at best a secondary meaning of forgiveness, Rev Bouwman distorts the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptural norm is that repentance is necessary for forgiveness, not only regarding God forgiving us our sin, but also of us forgiving those who sin against us (cf. Luke 17:3,4). The decision of Classis, which seeks to rectify this, is ambiguous, and could allow for the doctrine (which was previously judged wrong in the sermon of Luke 15) to be continued. Thus this further clarification is needed. Thus the decision of Classis North of October 2002 (Art 17 & 19) is overturned and the appeal is upheld.

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 161 - Br&Sr CJ & IK Byl appeal against Classis North Oct 2002 (Art 17)

I. Material

Agenda Item 8ww Point Three

1. Classis Oct 2002 Art 17:

- 1.1. **Appeal to Classis:** That Rev Bouwman and Kelmscott consistory wrongly continues to dismiss the existence of God's servants, the Authorities, pointing only to God, who will ultimately judge.
- 1.2. **Classis decides:** not to uphold this request
- 1.3. **Grounds:** Rev Bouwman and the Kelmscott consistory prove that they uphold the rightful place the Lord has given to the civil

authorities. In the sermon on Romans 13:1 Rev Bouwman says; of the civil government that they *are God's tools through whom He would work peace and good order in public life – including bringing judgment on covenant breakers.*

2. **Synod 2003**

2.1. **Appeal:** They appeal the decision of Classis.

2.2. **Grounds:** Classis is correct that Rev Bouwman does say a few things about being subject to the authorities, but he negates it by equating going to the authorities with wanting revenge, repaying evil with evil and taking the law into one's own hands, inferring that going to the authorities must therefore always be wrong. The correct and the incorrect do not belong together in a sermon, if the conflict between the two is not clearly pointed out.

DECLARED ADMISSIBLE

II. Decision

To uphold the appeal.

III. Grounds:

As Classis points out, Rev Bouwman writes that the civil government “are God's tools through whom He would work peace and good order in public life – including bringing judgment on covenant breakers.” Later in the same sermon Rev Bouwman writes,

“Showing such love may be easy enough when things go well and your neighbour is nice to you. But Paul knows that in the brokenness of this life people are not as nice to each other as they ought to be. One can persecute the other, one can do evil to the other. Then what? Get back? Take justice in your own hands? Vs 14: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” Vs 17: “Repay no one evil for evil.” It all comes down to the instruction of vs 19: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath.” That's to say: leave room, leave place, for God to express His wrath on the person who has hurt you – for in hurting you that person has sinned against God. To leave room for God's wrath is the punch of the quote in vs 19: “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” So: it's not for people to get back at people for the evil they do to us; it's for us –in Jesus' words to turn the other cheek (Mt 5:39), and leave justice for God to pursue. And how does God pursue justice on the evil doer? There's the point of chap 13. For the “governing authorities” are “God's minister”, the authorities are the arm of God whereby He punishes the one who did evil against His child.”

He then goes on to explain how the governing authorities God's servants to execute wrath on him who practices evil? There he makes the connection back to Romans 12:19 to Deut 32:35 and explains that

"The point is: God shall most definitely execute His covenant justice on this people of His that turns from Him. 'Vengeance is Mine,' says that Song, and that doesn't mean simply that vengeance is God's department; it means that God will make sure that vengeance occurs. And He'll make sure that vengeance occurs because God is faithful to His covenant and so pursues evil amongst His covenant people with His covenant wrath. 'Vengeance is Mine,' and that's to say that vengeance shall happen; shall happen because sin against a brother is first of all sin against God, and God will not be slighted."

Then follows an example of David who did not avenge himself on Saul but rather left place for God's wrath. And God eventually used the Philistines as His tool to punish Saul.

1. Rev Bouwman's line of reasoning would indicate that victims of injustice are to do nothing in the pursuit of justice (such as bring these matters to the attention of the civil authorities). They are to leave it to God to act at His time, and in His manner, apart from their involvement. In His own time and manner, God will bring upon the covenant breaker a curse as described in Deut 32. (*"I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. 24 They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust. 25 The sword shall destroy outside; there shall be terror within For the young man and virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs. 26 I would have said, 'I will dash them in pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men.'")* Or as in the case of David God may use a hostile nation to execute His wrath on the wrongdoer.
2. In so explaining Romans 13, Rev Bouwman confuses the manner by which God punished His apostate theocratic nation as a whole with how God will punish one of the disobedient people of Israel. In the OT, a victim would bring the offender before the elders (who bore the sword of justice in the theocratic nation of Israel), together with witnesses. The offender would be judged by these men, and if found guilty, subsequently punished by men who acted on God's behalf. In Romans 13, Paul makes it clear that in the NT the civil authorities have been entrusted with the sword of justice. Victims of crimes may seek justice from these civil authorities. The offender is to be judged by these men, and if found guilty, subsequently punished by these men who act on God's behalf.
3. It is regrettable that Rev Bouwman uses the example of David and Saul, since the situation of David is not comparable to

Romans 13. David was not able to appeal for justice to the civil authority, since the highest civil authority was the one committing the injustice. Rev Bouwman would have done better to take his example from the examples of the justice sought by victims and applied by the elders as described in Deut 19,21,22, 25. Or from the NT of Paul who also used the Roman system of justice to defend himself (cf. Acts 25:11, 28:19).

ADOPTED

Those who have previously been involved in these decisions in Classis North did not vote.

Article 162 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 163 - Dealt with in Closed Session

EVENING SESSION
Thursday, 16 October 2003

Article 164 - Re-Opening Evening Session

The Chairman requests delegates to sing from Psalm 34:1.

Article 165 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 166 - Dealt with in Closed Session

Article 167 - Synod Budget

The treasurer provides an updated Synod Budget due to the second sitting of Synod. The budget will be included as an Appendix.

ADOPTED

Article 168 - Publication of the Acts

Synod decides:

- a. which of the Articles of the Second Session will be published in the open Acts, and which will be included in the closed Acts.
- b. which of the appendices of the committee report will be included in the open Acts, and which will be included in the closed Acts.
- c. that the entire advisory committee report with appendices will be kept in the archives.
- d. a copy of the committee report and the audio interviews will be placed in the Synod Archives.
- e. all of the Acts (Open and Closed) will be sent to FRC Kelmscott.

- f. all of the Acts (Open and Closed) will be sent to the next convening church of Classis North.
- g. that the second session of the Acts will not be put on the Internet.

ADOPTED

Article 169 - Adoption of the Press Release

The press release was distributed and approved.

Article 170 - Adoption of Acts of Synod

Articles 148 to 169 were adopted.

Article 171 - Censure according to Article 47 CO

The Chairman states that there is no need for censure in this sitting of Synod.

Article 172 - Closing

The chairman briefly reflected on the difficult matters that Synod had to deal with, and expressed appreciation for the work of the delegates.

Appreciation was expressed for the work done by the moderamen and the advisory committee.

The Vice Chairman requested Synod to sing Hymn 63:1&2 and then led in prayer. The Chairman closes Synod.

ACTS OF THE 2003 SYNOD

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Speeches at Synod

Speech to FRCA Synod – Rockingham, Western Australia by Reverend J Plug on behalf of the Committee on Relations Abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

Beloved Brothers (and Sisters) in our Lord Jesus Christ:

What is Reformed? This question is of particular importance in the face of a 'Call to Reformation' which was issued a number of months ago in the Netherlands, and which recently surfaced publicly in the FRCA as well. Whatever one may think of the publication, or whatever side one comes down on in regard to the issues it raises concerning church life in the Netherlands, we may welcome the opportunity it grants us to reflect on the question with which I began. Because we share the conviction, I trust, that with 'Reformed', we do not mean a local or time-bound variant of the Christian church, but the truly catholic Christian identity which cannot be relinquished without falling away from the truth once entrusted to the apostles and the calling which applies to all those who would be gathered, defended and preserved by Christ, from the beginning of the world to its end, by his Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith.

What is Reformed? Certainly, within our own shared (Dutch) tradition, we have a rich history from which to answer that question. Anyone who knows his church history glories at God's work during the time of the great Reformation. After a period of great deformation, all over the Netherlands, Christ's Church re-formed itself. Those of you who remember the variety of church experience which the early immigrants brought with them to Australia in the early fifties, have some inkling of how varied the expectations, customs, liturgical practices, etc. were in the great 'immigration' from Roman hierarchy and heresy. Nonetheless, churches from all regions of the Netherlands were able to recognize each other as truly Reformed on the basis of a common, Scriptural, confession. Within a few decades, the foundations of Reformed church life in the Low countries were established. Not a basis of uniformity or complete unanimity in all things, but 'unity of faith' as expressed in what became known as the Three Forms of Unity. By the Lord's blessing, the churches returned, again and again, to that basis, no more, no less, in order to maintain the privilege of being truly 'Reformed'.

There have been times that church political developments were the catalyst which sparked a renewed search for those roots, there were times when the introduction of new hymns and worship practices did so, there were times when differences in theological opinion did so. It should be noted, however, that it was never change or innovation or debate or diversity as such which determined the degree of Reformedness of the churches, but the extent to

Appendix 1 – Speeches at Synod

which these interacted with the foundation: the Scriptural truth maintained in the Three Forms of Unity. One need only be reminded of the groundbreaking work of Schilder and his fellows, who dared to expose the limitations of prevailing opinion, time-hallowed as these were.

Brothers and sisters, we will be pleased – as we should be – to answer questions concerning developments in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, should it be necessary to do so. We would ask, however, that any judgments you make not be based on information gathered from here and there, nor on personal statements of teachers from past or present, sometimes quoted with a predisposition to condemn, or taken out of context and explained contrary to their meaning. Rather, we would ask you to judge on the basis of the public actions of these churches themselves and from the declared and unanimous statements of these churches as they met in Synod.

We ask this with great emphasis, as we must sadly point out that the so-called ‘Call to Reformation’ is not truly Reformed, not fair, and largely counterproductive. It may be known to you that after a short period of unrest following its publication, and effective rebuttals of its allegations by writers from the broadest possible spectrum within the churches, the ‘Call...’ has gone universally unheeded. Its authors have interpreted the subsequent deafening silence as unwillingness to respond, as wilful hardening in disobedience, and any number of other disqualifications. The fact is that so-called ‘reality’ which they describe is so far removed from the actuality of church life that there seems to be little room for real debate. In addition, the ‘Call...’ itself is so definite and so massive in its judgment that it effectively excludes any such discussion.

It struck us that your deputies’ report about the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not mention the ‘Call...’. We are content that it be so. However, we realize that the matter, though not leading to wide unrest in the Dutch Churches, has the potential of having an disproportionate effect upon your perception of these churches. May we ask you to apply the Scriptural wisdom to which your chairman referred in his excellent opening address to Synod last evening? We prayed for this wisdom, and we trust that the Lord will hear our prayer. We are very pleased at the balanced and constructive tone of your deputies’ report. Other than the unusual spelling of the placename Zuidhorn (‘Zuidhoorn’), we are appreciative of and would support the recommendations of your deputies. We welcome every communication that confronts us with only basis: the Scriptural doctrine of our Reformed confessions. We have asked for your assistance in coming to grips with the issues raised by our decisions at the Synod of Leusden, and your input has been very seriously considered and incorporated into the decision making process. The churches were not convinced by some of your arguments, that is clear. But the benefit of our sister-church relationship has been obvious to us, and we trust, to you.

Many of you are aware of the issues dealt with at our 2002 synod: outreach and evangelism; mission, foreign and mission aid, and theological training; relations with a number of foreign churches; the promotion of unity between churches who with us hold to the Reformed confession of Biblical truth. In the area of Liturgy and Worship: decisions with respect to orders of worship, new liturgical forms, the extension and modernization of our Psalter and Hymnal, Bible Translation. In the area of Pastorate and Congregational Life: further integration of members with handicaps; the diaconate; sexual abuse in pastoral relations; marriage, divorce and remarriage; the significance and meaning of our Lord's command concerning the Sabbath. As we discussed these things, yes, there has been evidence of unrest with respect to the pace and direction of liturgical developments, for instance; and concerns about the Church's testimony on the fourth and seventh commandments.

As churches we are facing a number of trends in the world at large which have impacted on us as well. Ongoing secularization is a troubling fact. A huge influx of and growing self-consciousness among Muslim immigrants, seen at once as both a threat and an unparalleled opportunity. Postmodernism as a worldview is affecting hearts and minds. The most telling example was a letter written - under a pseudonym - by a Reformed minister in a national newspaper. He questioned many assumptions in way that brought instant recognition. Provocatively, he said, for instance, 'while a fire is raging, our assemblies are spending their time arguing about the colours of the elevator knobs!' His letter spawned a wide-ranging discussion about the relevancy and even reality of canonical answers. Shocking, to many, that a minister should ask such questions and voice his doubts.

This is the reality our churches are facing. We continue to be sinful people, comprising churches at risk, threatened by the devil, the world, and our own flesh. On the other hand, there is another reality: that of churches where each Lord's Day the Word of God continues to be proclaimed, where people continue coming to worship. Evidence of God's faithfulness, of Christ's increasing, defending and preserving His church, and of the Spirit doing mighty works.

Our sister-church relations with churches close to you – geographically speaking – have also been experienced as a blessing. As you know, with the concurring advice of your deputies, at Zuidhorn sister-church relations were established with the RCNZ. Since Zuidhorn, an informal visit was made by one of our delegates. The one issue which was given particular importance by your deputies in discussion with us, that of the continuing relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA, was given due attention, as we had promised.

In addition, after the implementation of sister-church relations with the PCEA, we were privileged to have a delegation at their Synod 2003. We obtained a very good hearing for our plea that they return to a positive discussion with the FRCA on the issues which have proved to be a stumbling block on the road to church unity. We see that good hearing as a benefit due to the route we (as

Appendix 1 – Speeches at Synod

have the Canadian Reformed Churches, in similar circumstances) have followed to recognition. I quote from our address to the Synod of the PCEA.

These our sister churches, the FRCA, are very, very dear to us. As you may have experienced them in the many years in which you were trying to develop contacts with them: they are frank and forthright, they can be critical, sometimes perhaps abrasive and some might even say aggressive in their approach. But there are qualities there, in our opinion, which we would be sorry for you to overlook. An invaluable confessional integrity, a genuine commitment and tenaciousness in maintaining the faith. They display great missionary awareness and desire, stretching their resources to an almost incredible extent in order to bring God's word to the world. In short: there is a vigour and vitality in those churches which we would love to see accrue to your benefit.

It is our desire to see the FRCA develop greater confidence and trust in ecumenical relations. We will be encouraging them, for instance, to review their position vis-a-vis the ICRC. And we will be challenging them to continue striving for warmer contacts with yourselves. But we would like you also to do whatever you can to reopen the engagement with them and with the issues which they have asked you to seriously consider. We do so because we feel they have a great deal to offer you. Certainly also – in the light of your discussions today – many young, committed and truly Reformed young people whose potential you might be able to harness. But we also do so because we are convinced that if you earnestly seek ways, before the face of God, to deal with what has brought your relations to an impasse, it will invigorate and strengthen both your church bodies.

If we might be so bold as to chart out a course which we believe offers the greatest perspective, it would be for you to return, as it were, to 1998. I would like to remind you of what the FRCA Synod then decided, and we truly believe that in every way they meant what they said: 'to offer the PCEA sister relations as a first step towards full unity if they can agree to the above statements...' You all ought to be familiar with those statements. Three, or perhaps better two issues concerning supervision of the Lord's Table and the pulpit were seen to be important enough to discuss and come to agreement on. Understanding – and concurring with – the concerns of the FRCA, we are absolutely convinced that these statements were in no way designed to raise a barrier or hurdle against you. Rather, they were intended to establish rapport: to be sure that as churches of different traditions speak with each other, they do so using the same Scriptural and confessional terms. What the FRCA adduced as ground was genuine: 'although Synod is convinced that it expresses in the statements the Scriptural position regarding these matters of concern, we are open to dialogue with the PCEA about these matters on the basis of Scripture and confession.'

We ask: what Reformed or Presbyterian church would justifiably not be willing to engage in such dialogue on such a basis? We are aware that your Synod offered a response. Rightly or wrongly, we think the impression was received

that you did not seriously engage with the convictions laid before you. Only one presbytery offered a response, and that response was the work of one man. It is our conviction that your renewed willingness to enter into the dialogue the FRCA suggested would lead to perhaps unexpected blessings. And let me reiterate: the positions taken by the FRCA on pulpit and the Lord's Table are also those of our churches. You know that we have taken a different route than they. We feel that a sister-relationship could responsibly come before agreement, they seek agreement before coming to such relations. But we do not differ in conviction.

Implicit in what you have just heard is a renewed appeal to your churches. We sincerely believe that the cause of truly Reformed ecumenicity and catholicity would be advanced if you would find ways to re-engage with Reformed and Presbyterian churches in this country. We are convinced that the ICRC are a God-given vehicle for such engagement, and we are sorry, every time we meet in that context, that we are there without you.

Brothers and sisters: this has been a short word of exhortation. We look forward to discussing, at your invitation, such matters as seem significant to our bonds of churches. It is a true privilege to be received so warmly, and to experience the bond of faith in a very practical way. On behalf of your sister-churches in the Netherlands, we offer you our very sincere greetings and well-wishes. May our Lord continue to grant you His indispensable wisdom in dealing with your full agenda. And may your deliberations and decisions serve the LORD's cause in a world which is increasingly inhospitable to those who faithfully serve his anointed King.

Reverend J Plug

Response to the address of Reverend J Plug, on behalf of Synod by Reverend W Huizinga

Thank you, Rev J Plug, for your address, your greetings, your information and your comments on behalf of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

We are very happy that our Dutch sister churches continue to visit us, even with two delegates. It shows us that your love and concern for us is indeed genuine. That is the first purpose of sister relations. By your presence at our synods you display how you wish in a practical manner want to be a hand and a foot to us.

You addressed the question of what it means to be reformed? It is clear that you stress the fundamental pillars of the church, namely, the Scriptures as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. You do not want to be known as reformed churches of a certain garden-variety, but rather show that you want to truly catholic, in the line of the church of all ages.

In consequence you wish to be judged on the basis of the decisions of the churches as they meet in general synods. That is fair enough, and we endeavour to do so.

You state your stance on the *Call to Reformation* as sent out by about forty of your church members. You state that it is *not fair, not truly reformed and is largely counter-productive*. At this point in time our deputies have refrained from making a judgment. The Acts of your General Synod of Zuidhorn have after all not reached us, have not reached the churches and the members in your churches. We need to give time to your churches to read and review those actions of Zuidhorn. Meanwhile our deputies keep themselves informed. They read not only the *Call to Reformation* but also the many, various articles in your church magazines. Those responses give us a good insight to this movement as well as how it is received in your churches. Since I am speaking on behalf of synod and deputies, it is inappropriate that more be said.

As far as the *Call to Reformation* itself goes our synod has received it for our information and it will serve during our discussion about our sister relations with you. More cannot be said at this point.

We do want to thank you again for the excellent reception you gave our delegates last year when they visited the GS Zuidhorn. We enjoyed your synod as we stated in our address. For example, the multiplicity of your foreign relations means that you have many foreign delegates at your general synods. It was a pleasure to meet many of them, and to hear them in their mother tongues, with the help of interpreters, address synod. I have fond memories of Rev Mada Biha of the GGRI explaining in Indonesian how many evangelists in their midst work with empty stomachs. As I translated this into English for the Kenyan brothers beside me, they broke out into loud laughter, and they

whispered to me – we have that all the time! A more difficult task was to translate into English the impassioned Rev P Nel as he spoke in Afrikaans about their difficulties with the Dopperkerken in Zuid Afrika. He was too quick for me. But it was a pleasure to see how you have many relations, how you offer many foreign churches a variety of help and support.

Also we thank you that you took our concerns seriously. You organised meetings between our delegates and your deputies before we visited synod. Thank you for those three days which offered much opportunity for discussions together. Your help in passing on our letters of concern to the GS Zuidhorn was also much appreciated. As a result those letters were adopted as part of the material on agenda. GS Zuidhorn even promised us as sister churches separate answers to those letters. We look forward to the answers.

You noted the growing secularisation in The Netherlands. It means that the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands are churches at risk. But you are not the only ones. Many of the same trends occur here as well. May the Triune God guard you with the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit as you struggle not to succumb to our sworn enemies. May He strengthen and uphold you so that you always firmly resist our enemies, until the Day of our LORD comes in which He gives us the complete victory. We are also prepared to use our rules for sister churches to encourage and exhort you to live as reformed churches in the midst of a darkening world. We hope you do the same for us.

Thanks for your cooperation on two key matters - the RCNZ and the PCEA. We asked you to keep the matter of triangular relations – the RCNZ & CRCA & FRCA – before the RCNZ. You have done that. Thank you. Also, you attended the 2003 General Assembly of the PCEA and encouraged them in a very practical manner to renew the dialogue with us. In these two important relations you have kept your word, and have helped us.

You appeal to us to re-engage reformed and presbyterian churches in Australia. You do not specify which churches you mean, but I take it you refer to the CRCA & PCEA.

Our deputies have worked hard over the years to engage the CRCA in meaningful dialogue. We managed to clear away historical problems from the past but we could not overcome problems concerning the present. At present the dialogue ceases. That is unfortunate, but we cannot force them to listen to our appeals.

Concerning the PCEA, we thank you for your efforts, but it seems that we are faced with the challenging question to recognise them as true churches before meaningful dialogue will be possible with them.

You also ask us to rejoin the ICRC. You miss us. Thank you for that. You know that we took that decision on practical grounds. For us to rejoin would require a

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local church or local churches to overture classis to rejoin the ICRC and for classis to overture a forthcoming synod. Thus please do not expect that to happen at this synod.

In conclusion, we wish you a fruitful stay in our midst. We hope you enjoy our hospitality. It is a pleasure to have you in our midst and to use your experience at our synod.

May the head of the churches direct the sister churches in The Netherlands according to his Word and by his Spirit, so that He may use you fruitfully for varied service and for the coming of his kingdom. May He keep you faithful to Himself and to his Word so that the lampstands there may remain and may penetrate the darkening, secularised society with clear light.

Reverend W Huizinga

Speech to FRCA Synod 2003 – Rockingham, Western Australia by Reverend Dr M Flinn on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Mr. Chairman
Members of the Moderamen
Fellow delegates, and visitors to the synod:

Thank you for the welcome I have received and for the privilege of addressing you at this synod. For me, this is the third time that I have stood in your midst in this capacity and we have also been able to welcome your delegates at our synods over the last 12 years. This mutual exchange has led to a greater understanding of one another's positions and we are grateful for the attempts you have made to overcome the obstacles that remain toward moving forward in our ecclesiastical relationship.

I bring greetings on behalf our churches in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We don't always see things the same way, and we are not carbon copies of one another. Our churches have a slightly different history and background from that of your own churches but in spite of minor differences, we stand together in the historic Reformed faith. We testify to the sovereignty of God in the world at large and in salvation and we proclaim man's calling and purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever. In a day when there is much misunderstanding and false teaching among those who claim to follow Christ, and much godlessness and unbelief in society at large, these truths that we profess are a great heritage. They are not a trench into which we must retreat but a citadel from which we must advance, and as churches we would like to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in our service to the King.

Let me update you with something of what lives in our churches across the Tasman. Our current membership stands at just over 3300 in 19 congregations. Since your last synod, we have been blessed by the institution of two new congregations, one in Hamilton and one in Christchurch. These churches were established as a result of congregations growing large (by our standards) and wanting to reach out in other parts of these cities. Both mother and daughter churches continue to receive blessing. I can speak personally about that because I am privileged to serve in one of those new congregations in Christchurch. In addition, one of our ministers is serving in a home mission work in Wanganui. The congregation there is small but very keen and enthusiastic. Then too in the Wellington area, we have a minister who has recently come from South Africa, and who is serving as a home missionary with a special focus on the many South African immigrants that we have in New Zealand. This is something new and exciting for us and we are seeking the Lord's blessing also in this area of outreach.

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In regard to overseas mission, our churches continue to support Miss Janice Reid in her work in radio broadcasting with the Far East Broadcasting Company. Beyond that, we have been especially encouraged by missionary opportunities that are opening up to us through the International Conference of Reformed Churches. We have been able to send pastors and a Christian school teacher to Uganda on short term mission work in association with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the US. More recently, one of our pastors has visited Myanmar and we are exploring the possibility of further short term mission work in the teaching and training of pastors and elders in the developing Reformed Churches there. Closer to home, our Overseas Mission Board has been investigating the possibility of sending a full-time missionary to PNG. One of our pastors was very keen to go there. He would have fitted in very well, but his family circumstances made this unwise at this time. Our churches are committed to exploring this possibility further and we remain in close contact with Rev. 'tHart. As I was putting this speech together, I received word of Mr. Wayne VanderHeide's appointment as Mission Worker for the work in Papua New Guinea. We are delighted to hear this and will pray for the Lord's blessing upon his work there.

On the interchurch relations front, we have entered a full sister church relationship with the GKN (Liberated) in the Netherlands and, closer to home, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. We are encouraged about these contacts and look forward to fruitful interaction and cooperation with these churches.

Since it is of particular interest and concern to you, let me give a little more detail about our relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Our sister church relationship with them has been under strain in recent years. We have been concerned about their decision to open the office of deacon to women, although in connection with this, they have separated off the deaconate from the ruling session. We have been concerned about their discussions regarding the procedures by which young people may profess their faith in the CRCA and also the variety of worship practices within the CRCA.

In recent years, we have been able to discuss these subjects openly with representatives of the CRCA and we were given extra time at their recent synod to express our concerns. It has been greatly encouraging to us that our communication has improved significantly. This is not to say that we agree on every point. However, we have been able to communicate honestly and with integrity in both the letter and spirit of our rules for sister church relationships and we have also had the grace to listen to our brothers when our approach in the past has not been as constructive and helpful as it may have been.

The subject of worship will be a matter of ongoing discussion. On the subject of children and church membership, I am pleased to report that the resolution of their recent synod was heartening to us. At CRCA Synod 2000, it was decided that children (possibly as young as 10) could make a profession of faith and

then attend the Lord's Supper, although with a slightly different wording than for older members, especially when it came to adherence to the confessions. Younger people could agree publicly with the confessions "in so far as they understood them". However, it was quite clear at Synod 2003 that the CRCA do not want to move away from the idea of "confessional membership". That is, they *do* want to retain some understanding of the confessions and a public acknowledgement of this in their professing membership. However, no congregation requires an exhaustive or comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the confessions as a condition for public profession of faith. It was therefore decided to go back to the earlier wording for all professions of faith. But this synod clarified what this meant by affirming: 1) that the second question of the profession of faith form does not require a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the confessions; 2) that the aim of this question is that, through ongoing instruction, we may grow in unity in the truth for which our Lord prayed in John 17:16,23.

As fraternal delegates to the CRCA Synod, we were more concerned with the decisions regarding women in the office of deacon. At least 7 CRCA congregations now have women deacons and in some cases the deacons do not meet separately from the session. Some other congregations have no problem with women as deacons but were waiting until the outcome of Synod 2003. On the other hand, some congregations are strongly opposed to the decision on Scriptural and Confessional grounds.

This was a major issue before Synod 2003 because of two significant appeals from two classes against the decision of Synod 2000. In many respects, our own concerns dovetail with those of the appellants. We are concerned that the study committee report that led the CRCA to this decision appeared not to deal adequately with what it means to be ordained into office in the church, and the relationship between the offices of pastor, elder and deacon, and the three-fold offices of Christ. From our point of view there was not sufficient Scriptural evidence for the CRCA to take the decision to permit women to be ordained as deacons. In fact, the study committee concluded that the Scriptures were not conclusive as to whether or not this was permitted. In spite of that climate of uncertainty within the CRCA on the teaching of Scripture in this matter, they have taken a decision which is a departure from long established practice in Reformed churches. The appellants argued, on the basis of Scripture and Confession, that the decision of Synod 2000 should be reversed. However, the majority of delegates at Synod 2003 were not persuaded by the arguments brought forward by the appellants. Everyone was given ample time to present his views but when the appeals were put to the vote, they were not sustained.

Later, a further decision was taken in relation to this matter. It was decided to establish a committee to further study the confessional issue raised by the CRCA's separation of the diaconate from the session and to bring its findings back to the next synod. It was stated that depending on its findings, this committee may demonstrate the correctness of the traditional interpretation of

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the relevant articles of the Belgic Confession; demonstrate that the Confession does not in fact require us to keep the deacons on session; or instigate a process leading to a gravamen. As you can see, the matter is still under discussion in the CRCA and we will be monitoring this closely.

We are sad that the discussions between yourselves and the CRCA have broken down. Both your committees responsible for ecumenical contact have concluded that further discussions, at this point, would not be productive. While we respect your decisions and your right to make them, we do believe that face to face interaction is the only way that you will be able to remove the misunderstandings and misconceptions that exist on both sides and make any progress in discussing the real issues that separate you.

What of our relationship with you? Our Synod 2002 expressed thanks to you for your acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and for your proposal to establish a fraternal relationship with us. On reading your deputies' report to this synod, I realize that we may have been hasty in interpreting the decision of Synod West Albany 2000 as a clear acknowledgment of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches. However, we can perhaps be forgiven for this. In your deputies' letter to our churches, which was circulated prior to our Synod 2002, it was stated: "As you can read in the decision, consequent on the FRCA being able to recognize the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, the proposal to offer Fraternal relations was adopted, however the implementation of the decision was postponed until several matters were resolved." We took this to mean that the "in principle" status of the decision related primarily to the proposal to establish fraternal relations and not the recognition of our churches as true and faithful.

That misconception aside, Synod 2002 re-affirmed its desire to offer the FRCA a sister-church relationship. We do not have the category of fraternal relations and it is our desire to relate to you on the highest level of ecumenical contact. Reading your deputies' report to this synod, I can see that this may not be possible at this stage because of our relationship with the CRCA. You will have to debate this matter, but from our side, we wish to be open to you, to explain clearly where we are at and why in the hope that the remaining impediment can be removed.

Brothers, we pray for the Lord's blessings upon your deliberations – that your decisions may be in accordance with the revealed Word and for the furtherance of the Lord's kingdom here in Australia and further afield.

Thank you
Reverend Dr Michael Flinn

Response to the address of Reverend M Flinn, on behalf of Synod by Br L van Burgel

Dear Rev Dr Flinn, Chairman and delegates of Synod, brothers and sisters.

Once again a hearty welcome to you and let me again express our joy to again have you address us on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. It was only 12 months ago that Rev Veldman and myself visited your synod and was made most welcome by your churches. We still have fond memories of that stay in your beautiful country and the city of Christchurch.

It was our hope that our visit to New Zealand and the others that have preceded it would lead to a better understanding of each other. The same applies to visit by your delegates to our synods. For this reason we rejoice when we can welcome each others delegates each time again, although this exposes you to fact that we are not all agreed in the way the FRCA is to move forward in our relations with you. What we have learned in our visits, and we trust you will experience this also, is that we share much in common. You acknowledged that in your greetings to us yesterday. We together desire to stand on common basis of the Reformed faith. The way we approach some issues may differ, but we nevertheless with you want to profess God's Name and to serve Him according to His Word. We wholehearted endorse and echo your words of yesterday that the truths we profess are a great heritage ... they are a citadel from which we must advance and as church we also would like to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in defence of that truth and in service to our King.

We rejoice with you when we hear of the growth in your congregations and hear of your endeavours in home and overseas mission work. As with your synod, this synod will deal with the practical issues associated with this work as the churches wrestle with the challenges of working within differing cultural environments. Also in this we can learn from each other.

Our deputies have reported that your synod expressed thanks for our acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. You noted in your speech that you now realise that this was based on a misconception of what the decision of Synod West Albany entailed. Whether that was indeed a misconception remains to be seen. As you can read in the variety of submissions presented to this synod regarding that decision, there are others who had trouble coming to grips with what the decision really meant. Deputies also wondered whether one could "in principle" recognise a church as "true and faithful", although they do not debate the issue, leaving that for this synod to clarify. Misconception or not, the message that respective synods have strongly conveyed to you is our gratitude "for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the Reformed Churches in New Zealand". This was the clear message of Synod Kelmscott 1996, Synod Launceston 1998 and Synod

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West Albany 2001. However, the FRCA in the past has held back from official declarations regarding “true and faithful” until this can be accompanied by the exercise of the responsibilities and privileges which this recognition gives. You have a different approach, and we accept and appreciate that. We are humbled by the fact that you remain patient with us and that also your last synod held open the offer of sister relations when the FRCA are ready for that step.

This leads us to reason why this step of offering sister relations has not (yet) been taken, that is: the impediment of the triangular relations with the CRCA to which you referred extensively in your speech. Your synod before last (1998) rightly recognised that there is more than one way to solve the triangular problem and therefore encouraged us to work diligently to remove obstacles that separate the FRCA from the CRCA.

(When we as Australian delegates arrived at your 2002 synod, we soon realised how serious you were about this. In finding our places amongst the 58 delegates, to our left were the delegates of the CRCA whilst to our right were seated the delegates of the RTC in Geelong. I will add that our discussions did progress beyond pass the peppermint stage!)

In the meantime our synods have encouraged *you* to exercise sisterly admonitions over the CRCA where needed. We are appreciative that you indeed do continue to use your sister relations with the CRCA in the way that you do. Your last synod expressed concerns regarding “decisions on women as deacons, children at the Lord’s Supper and worship practises in the CRCA” and you have enlightened us what the reaction of the CRCA is to your concerns. The decisions of the last CRCA synod, judging from your comments and from press releases continue to leave us great cause for concern at the ongoing developments. Concerns, especially those regarding ordination of women as deacons which you also share. We note that the CRCA synod also made other decisions which leave us dismayed. I refer for example to the situation regarding Rev. FJ van Hulst, deposed from our churches on the grounds of false teachings. The CRCA Synod supported the actions of Classis Tasmania who examined Rev. van Hulst as to his soundness in doctrine and concluded that his doctrinal commitment to Scripture and Confession were beyond reproach and on that basis gave him licence to preach and teach.

Not only do we deplore that decision, it is an example of the difficulties a triangular relationship could bring us. You also expressed regret that the discussions between us and the CRCA have broken down. In our deputies report you can read the reasons for this. Not only have the CRCA tended to minimise the differences between us and failed to address our concerns, the previous synod of the CRCA instructed their deputies to submit an appeal to us regarding our view of the church. It was one of the reasons our last synod re-appointed deputies contact CRCA. However this appeal failed to materialise.

Although your relations with the CRCA remains an impediment for us, we are heartened by your principled approach to your interchurch relations. We encourage you to continue to address your sister where needed. We still hope and pray that the CRCA will heed admonitions and return to a historical Reformed way. Nevertheless as was pointed out by Rev Veldman in his address to your synod “we understand the ties you have with the CRCA will not be easily broken, but at the same time appeals make only sense when in the end we will also enforce the consequences.

In conclusion, we thank you Rev Flinn, and through you the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, for the good wishes extended to us. It is our earnest prayer that our churches may continue to seek and defend the truth of God's Word. May you as a Christ's church fulfil your calling in New Zealand and abroad so also be a witness to the people of New Zealand to the salvation of many. May in all this God's Name be exalted and glorified.

L van Burgel
Secretary Deputies Relations Reformed Churches (Other)

Speech to FRCA Synod 2003 – Rockingham, Western Australia by Reverend P Nel on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

Dear Chairman, delegates and all brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Almost exactly three years ago your delegate, Reverend Clarence Bouwman was present at our synod and he had a message from you. We were not very familiar with your churches at that stage. We knew about you from reports, like the report of Reverend Viljoen after his visit here and from individuals like Reverend Kees Kleyn, who was minister at Legana. But it was when brother Bouwman spoke, that the reality of your existence and support really dawned on us. We experienced the reality of Christian brotherly love and it meant a lot to us. The truth of the Catholic Church became very real again and therewith the words of second John 1:1-4: *"To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father."* You appeared almost from nowhere and you were sent, no doubt. You have been strengthening your smallest little sister ever since. Our Lord has ordained it, like He does with everything else, in perfect timing.

That bond is even stronger today and you a reality that we treasure. How can I forget my visit to your churches in 2001. I saw a God fearing people in the midst of a secular, a materialistic and prosperous land. I understood again that the Lord works where His word, as confessed by His church of all ages, is being respected and obeyed.

But beloved, let us always remember that our greatest danger lies within us all. It is the sinful tendency of man, even religious man, to reinvent the wheel, to chop and change the unchanging truths of Scripture as stipulated in our confessions! To stand firm on these unchanging norms in these days is tough. The pressure to compromise is immense and the natural inward and sinful tendency to adhere to these temptations is as real as life itself. Who likes to be alone? On the other hand a helpful hand from a sister, like the one you extended to us, is ever so important in all the ecclesiastical relations of the Lords Church.

Brothers, our churches have sent me to encourage you and assure you of our prayers and support. Let us not be disheartened by the immensity of our task. Let nothing make us refrain from our calling, whether we experience the threats of the devil, the resistance from man, whether we stumble because of our own weaknesses, the enormity of the agenda or it's delicate contents, but let us

rejoice in God and in His covenant promises. We cannot change the world, man or history, but God can. He governs it all and us all. What He asks from his church is only trust and obedience. In Christ we have, through faith, all the heavenly blessings promised in the Gospel and sealed by the sacraments. Let us say, as David said: *For by Thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall* (Ps 18:29). See His great blessings on you in the way that you have grown from your moderate beginnings and take courage in the echoing voices of those who are truthfully abiding in the reformed confessions with you all over the world.

Brothers we are all toiling hard and our time is few and very precious. There are so many things that we want to do, even things that we wish we could do over again. Be reminded though that there is no better calling than the calling of our Great Shepherd. Don't become weary of doing the good work (Gal 6:9). When we have done all that we should let us say: *"We are unprofitable servants, we have only done what we are supposed to do"* (Luk 17:10). Let us remember the words of our Lord when He said: *"For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45).

May we always argue, as far as possible, in principle and not in a personal, emotional or strategic way. Let us do our churches the favour of being clear on the unchangeable confession of the true church. In these post modernistic times the Herd must hear the loving but holy voice of the Shepherd leading them through the crooked valleys of this sinful world.

In South Africa your little sister has also been quite busy. I mention a few things:

Something about the demographics first. We have eight instituted churches in South-Africa. Seven who is up North in the vicinity of Pretoria and Johannesburg, approximately 1200 km from the church in Cape Town. They are Johannesburg, Pretoria, Pretoria-Maranatha, Bethal and Springs ("white churches"), Mamelodi and Soshangove-North ("black churches"). In Cape Town Reverend Breytenbach and Reverend Nicholson are working as missionaries amongst the colored people in Belhar and Wesbank. The churches are grouped in classis A (Pretoria, Springs and Cape Town) and B (Pretoria-Maranatha, Bethal and Johannesburg). Mamelodi and Soshangove have not yet been taken up in the bond of churches.

The *Work Under the Disenchanted* is continuing positively and we have learnt a lot. One is that the term "verontrustes" (disenchanted) is a bit vague and therefore caused some "verontrusting" in itself. Because of this we are suggesting a new name for deputies to our next synod. The name is: "National Reformation" and we feel that it is much more to the point. The principle of article 28 of the Belgic Confession will be even more central in this new vision. Another is that the first wave of disenchantment has settled itself and nearly all disenchanted now do belong to a structured group somewhere. This means

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that the work crystallized into a more formal phase where discussions will take place with identified groups. All churches will have to come to understand that we are all called to commit ourselves to a definite and structured national reformation, which includes the long term goal of one truly reformed bond of churches with a local and national address. Another fact that seems evident is that a fixed preaching point in an identified area is of strategic importance. Only when people are called to a practical commitment of discipleship, does the reality of being church break through. In the meantime the harvest was there, be it modest. Families and individuals were taken up in our churches. Through the work of Mendel Retief people have joined our churches and eight students are regularly attending classes at our Seminary. In Secunda the English ward is standing firm and we have regular visitors attending. In Cape Town Reverend Viljoen has tried new inroads and not without results. He has been invited to lead a Bible study group in Stellenbosch, the academic and cultural heartland of the Cape Province. We want to thank your churches, brothers, for your excellent support in this regard.

With the *Theological Training* things have also reached a new stage. Our theological school is modest but it is now an established institution. Although it is still very small, we may look back on many blessings. The very first student from our school, Jopie van der Linden has been working fruitfully in the FRC of Johannesburg. Apart from this one minister already in office we also have two final year students. At this stage Axel Hagg and Erik van der Linden are preparing for the final stages of their final year. The FRC of Cape Town has also enlisted two students from Belhar and Westbank, our colored missionary churches in the Cape Province. These two brothers, Carl van Wyk and Piet Abrahams, are now in their second year of training. Our churches did feel that proper training for all ministers of the Word is essential. Therefore they combined the academic training, basic languages included, with in the field training. We have also been cooperating with the Theological Seminary of Mokhanyo, where our black students are being trained. Brother Veenendaal was at synod last year and witnessed their examination and acceptance, with that of Jopie van der Linden. We will also receive our own premises in due time. It will be DV on that of the new grounds of our Maranatha church in Pretoria. The visit of professor Geerstema was also supportive of our theological school.

On the *missionary scene* things are also happening. Two of our black churches, Mamelodi and Soshangove North, have instituted and will soon request to be taken up in the bond of the FRCSA. Thanks to the hard work of our missionaries at the Mokhanyo Theological Seminary these churches have now called their own ministers, Tebogo Mogale and Piet Magagula, both products of Mokhanyo, to the two respective churches. Sad to say that one of our missionaries, Reverend Dirk Mauritz Boersma, was called to Denver and has already left. Soshangove North, where Reverend de Visser is the missionary, got their own primary school, named Lesedi after a long struggle with the education system in South-Africa.

Having mentioned this, may I add that the conditions in post-apartheid South-Africa, is far from ideal. Crime and corruption is in the order of the day. Nearly everyone has a close relative or friend who has been hijacked, robbed or attacked in house or on farm. The educational system in SA is not a bed of roses either. Government is aggressively attempting to eradicate the propagation of any one single religion in state schools replacing it with an inter faith approach. This is one reason why we are also visiting your schools in this period. The necessity of starting our own covenant schools is of prior importance. For this very reason we have decided, in our own church in Bethal, to start with our own "John Calvin School". Please pray for us. It will take a lot of hard work and devotion and we need all the support that we can get.

You may remember that the youngest church to be taken up in our bond is the church in *Springs*. Reverend Retief senior went on emeritus and Mendel Retief was called to serve in that church.

We have also had our share of intricacies in the matter of local church relations. Sad to say that the *synod of the Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika* was an enormous disappointment. There were warnings from us, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), Reverend John Rogers and the Uniting Reformed Churches (URC), Reverend Sikkema. Even though our warning signals, and that of these delegates were ignored that day, we were encouraged by the fact that these delegates had the strength to stand firmly. But our brothers in South-Africa carried through their decisions on allowing women in the office and accepting the new liberal "Cloete Psalmody". This new Psalmody approaches the messianic contents from the perspective of the new hermeneutic, which totally disconnects the Old and New Testament. It failed to take up the whole content of the Psalms in the lyrics and has reduced it to approximately two thirds. It is sad to say that they are slowly being sucked into the humanistic trends of so many churches that have gone on that route before them, including their two so called "sister churches", the Dutch Reformed Church and the Hervormde Kerk. No wonder that there are already clear voices of disenchantment in their own ranks. Two churches have already gone in "doleansie" after the last synod. Please pray for them and for us, your sister church in South-Africa, in our contacts with them. Given this new scenario we have lost our urgency in discussions with regard to unity. The issue is being discussed with our sister church in the Netherlands, the GKN (v), with whom the GKSA desires sisters church relations. Like you we also need a lot of wisdom to be the salt and the light that we must be, especially when it concerns a sister church relation on your own doorstep.

On *your doorstep* things have changed positively. A new Church stands in Bunbury and will hopefully have its own minister one of these days. We have noted in your last Bulletin that a even younger Darling Downs church instituted. This means that you have grown from a moderate number in the fifties to the twelve strong and vital churches that you are at the moment. We praise the

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Lord for His blessings upon you and acknowledge that respect for Him, his Word and his true church will always be blessed.

Brothers, you have important items on your agenda, especially that of church relations. May the Lord lead you in all wisdom walking in love but never compromising the truth. In closing down I'd like to remind us all of the words of Luther: "Peace if possible, but truth at any rate". The words of second John also comes to mind: *"And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have heard from the beginning: that we love one another."* And how is this love defined? John goes on and says: *"This is love, that we walk according to His commandments."* Thank you brother chairman, and all present.

Rev Pieter Nel, Free Reformed churches of South-Africa.

Response to the speech of Reverend P Nel, FRCSA, on behalf of Synod by Br B Veenendaal

Geagte broeder, Esteemed brother Rev Nel,

Given that you, in your address last evening, addressed us in our native tongue, I did consider to address you in your native tongue. But alas, I could only muster little more than the first two words in Afrikaans. So you'll have to forgive me for that.

Thankfully, however, language is not an obstacle, and as you rightly pointed out in your address, the bond between our churches has strengthened, particularly in the last several years. And what binds us together? The “love of the truth” as you pointed out from 2 John 1. The desire to love the truth and to walk in truth. It is the desire to do this together that has also motivated your bond of churches to send a delegate here to our synod. It is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to have you together with your wife in our midst and we are thankful for that.

We would like to thank you for your words of encouragement and support. Yes we are confronted with an immense task, the threats of Satan, the pressure to compromise, the weaknesses of our own flesh, the weighty agenda matters, but we need not face this in our own strength. In faith and through God's guidance with His Spirit, we can leap over a wall, as you indicated from Psalm 18 (the words which we could also sing from in our closing Psalm last evening). It is very comforting and encouraging to share that knowledge and that faith as sister churches.

It is very evident from your words of last night, that your churches too face an enormous task in the struggle of faith. Your work among the disenchanted, or should I say now, your “National Reformation” work, is continuing and it is very heartening to see fruits of this work, although not always in the direction or way that you have expected. We have had updates of this work published through our Una Sancta and this has helped us to understand more of the nature and immensity of this task. Our churches and members have been blessed so as to be able to support this task from the riches and wealth that have been entrusted to us, and, the Lord willing, we will continue to do so. May you receive the strength to continue this task, and may the Lord bless the work in Pretoria, in Secunda, in Stellenbosch, and the continuing and further endeavours that you undertake. May He also bless the church at Springs and the work that Mendel Retief is called to and undertaking in the church at Springs, another fruit of this work.

You are also very active in your mission work both in the Capetown region and in the Pretoria region. What a rich blessing to have, within the last year, the

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institution of 2 churches from these mission posts, that of Mamelodi and Soshanguve North, both right near Pretoria. You have your mission field right at your doorstep. For us, it is difficult to imagine, since our mission fields are overseas, relatively far away. It does bring its own challenges as you now look to integrating these 2 churches into your classes and the bond of churches. May the Lord bless that work which He has begun! May he bless those new churches, their congregation members and officebearers, together with the existing churches, so that together you may work fruitfully “in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life” (in the words of Lord’s Day 21). Those two new churches have already received Ministers of the Word in the persons of Rev Tebogo Mogale for the church at Mamelodi and Rev Piet Magagula for the church at Soshanguve North. Together with Rev Jopie VanderLinden of the church at Johannesburg, they are the (you can say first!) fruits of your own theological seminary for Afrikaans students as well as the cooperation with the Mokhanyo Theological seminary for the black students. It was a rich experience and blessing to witness, at your synod last year, the examination of three students of theology, and now to know that they have been ordained as Ministers of the Word! *“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”* (Rom 10:15).

In your address you also mentioned the deteriorating situation regarding law and order as well as education. This latter concern has led to your decision to begin with your own covenantal school in Bethal, and I know is also occupying much of your (and your wife’s) time here in Australia. With this decision comes much work and commitment which you certainly do recognise. May the Lord bless your endeavours and the contacts that you make so that faithful and covenant education may be provided for the children of His church in South Africa.

Regarding church relations, you have grave concerns in your contacts with the Reformed Church of South Africa (the Doppekerk). It is sad to see deformation in a church with a rich reformed heritage who have lost the way by following humanistic trends. May the Lord bless your contacts with the two churches that have left them as a result, so that together the unity of faith may be brought to a full expression. May God grant you the wisdom and guidance that you need in your dealings with the Doppe churches on your doorstep. May He also bless the contacts and discussions that you have with your (and our) sister churches in the Netherlands regarding this issue. We pray that God may lead us together in such a way that we stand united in facing the attacks of secularisation and deformation.

Finally, we thank the Lord for what He has given in your churches. Although you have many struggles and burdens as we do, you also have that living joy of faith. As we both celebrate 50 years of institution in our respective countries, we also share in many common struggles and joys. May God bless our contacts. May you also be encouraged and strengthened when you leave here and return home. Please pass on our greetings to your churches. In the words

of Rom 15:13 *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

Bert Veenendaal

Speech to FRCA Synod 2003 – Rockingham, Western Australia by Reverend Boersema on behalf of the Deputies of Relation of GGRI-NTT.

Dear brothers in Jesus Christ the Lord our Head and Saviour.

First of all on behalf of GGRI – NTT, we as Deputies of Relations – through this written address – would like to extend our brotherly greetings. May our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church through His Spirit and Word be with you and blesses this respected synod, and grant you all with necessary wisdom and clear conscience that all issues discussed in this forum will result in good and proper decisions for the edification of the Church on earth in accordance with the Word and doctrines that we affirm to be true namely the Three Forms of Unity.

We are also thankful for your invitation for us. However, our financial situation does not make it possible for our delegate to attend the Synod. Therefore, we requested rev. Dr. J.A. Boersema – a BBK delegate – to represent us GGRI – NTT. He is well familiar with our situation and struggle here since he was once served here for eight years and he just have visited us in May. Therefore, great is our hope that this respected synod would accept this delegate as our delegate as well. It is indeed a pity that we cannot attend this synod and meet face by face with you. It would have been a great opportunity for our relatively young and weak church to learn from you in term of organization. However, having rev. JA Boersema, as our representative is to prove our commitment to the sister relation that we already have with FRCA. We expect that through him our hopes are accommodated in this synod.

Brothers,

Tracing and learning from the history of the relation between GGRI-NTT and FRCA, we are thankful to our Lord Jesus Christ the Head of the Church because our relation as sister churches has been based on the right track, namely the firm foundation the Word and the Three Forms of Unity. The foundation on which our relation is based has to be maintained and defended in our own contexts, and synods are conscious effort of our churches for evaluation and for assisting each other to harmonize our vision, mission, and perception on various issues and calling; either issues related to internal calling or issues that concerns with external calling, in order to help and support each other as mandated by the doctrines we affirm to be true.

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It is our prayer therefore that our Lord through His Spirit and Word will lead, bless, and defend FRCA that you will always be faithful and stand firm upon the biblical teachings in every aspect of calling. We all realize that standing firm upon truth in the world full of heresy and falseness obligates the church to sound her prophetic voice as the witness of the truth. It is not an easy task. But we have the sure promise of the Lord that He will be the Church (US) until the end of time. In this, we as sister churches should pray for each other and 'bear one another's burdens' as the apostle Paul advised us. Therefore, we always expect prayer support of our brothers and sisters in FRCA, that with the help of the Lord we here in Indonesia can stand firm on the truth of our faith.

As sister church we realize that FRCA does not only remember us in prayer, but also in other areas. We are thankful also for your attention and support for the caderization of human resource in the field of theology such as financing the study of brother Pila Njuka. We perceive it as the expression of the love of all brothers and sisters in FRCA for us. It is important for us and has a strategic value for the development of theological education in NTT for the future. We realize that it may be too expensive finance education in Canada. And if FRCA is still willing to help us in this field, we can propose at this time to finance one of our available cadres to study in STT PCK (Kosin), or other reformed institutions. This brother has an adequate English capability.

In terms of theological education, we are consistent with our vision to have a non-interdenominational educational institution of reformed theology. Therefore we herewith emphasize that STT SETIA Jakarta where RCN have teaching lecturers, is not recommended for students from GGRI – NTT to study, because the School is interdenominational in nature. Therefore, The Reformed Churches is not able to supervise the doctrines taught there.

As for the two students from GGRI-NTT studying in that school is just a temporary policy taken in emergency situation, and both of them have finished their studies in our Theological School in Waimarangu (East Sumba).

Worth mention here as well are the other supports for the construction of our pastory / guest house of Gereja Reformasi Kupang and financial aids from Mission Aid and from brothers and sisters from the Rochingham Congregation for evangelization posts in Sabu and Sumba. All these are proofs that you have helped us – as a relatively weak church in terms of human as well as financial resource.

Learning that FRCA dan RCN (Lib) put their brotherly attention to us, herewith we would also suggest both sister church to coordinate with each other. We have addressed this issue in our proposal titled "A Concept for The Reorganization Of Relations Between Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia-NTT (GGRI-NTT) And Both Reformed Churches In The Netherlands And The Free Reformed Churches Of Australia (FRCA)". Through that proposal we expect both churches to have unity of Vision and Mission in assisting GGRI-NTT. Two areas where we think we are in need – since we are still weak in terms of

human as well as financial resources of help – are Theological Education and Evangelization. GGRI – NTT has determined to establish a quality educational institution in theology, and therefore in our synod we have decided to upgrade the status of the current school in Waimarang into an Academy and to move its location to Kupang. Since this project is of strategic value and requires a large sum of money, we do expect the coordination of involvement of RCN and FRCA. We are of the opinion that there need to be an agreement for 'three-parties' cooperation. The same is true for evangelization. Sumba Island is like a ripening field and ready for harvest. However, the harvester is not ready because of human and financial resource problem. Therefore an integrated policy is needed from sister churches interested in assisting in order to improve the quality of pastors and evangelists through trainings and courses in evangelization. We hope that East Sumba where most of the population is still the adherents of old religion of Marapu can get greater attention from FRCA dan RCN by assisting GGRI-NTT in the areas of evangelization. What we mean is a well programmed and arranged assistance through the deputies. Therefore, it is not just an assistance of local shurches or persons as we already receive now.

Brothers in the Lord, At the concluding part of this speech let us as your brothers address one question that has been our concern. It is your decision of FRCA to withdraw from ecumenical forum of the Reformed Churches namely ICRC. As the member of ICRC we would like to plea for you to reevaluate your decision of withdrawal from ICRC. We appreciate your policy, but we are of the opinion that critics of the development in ICRC can only be heard if FRCA remains in the forum. How can we testify the truth we perceive if we close ourselves? Are not the main sponsors of ICRC like RCN, PCK (Kosin) CanRC etc. are sister churches of FRCA?! Of course we do not mean to teach you on this issue. It is just as your sister church we are concerned to set forth this matter in order to be pondered by the servants of God who are entrusted to make policies in FRCA.

Finally, in this beautiful opportunity we also would like to inform you that our 9th Synod would be held, the Lord willing, in August or beginning of September 2003 in East Sumba. It is our hope and desire that you would send a delegate to attend our Synod.

Before concluding our speech, let us point out several issues from our side that we suggest you to discuss in this respected synod:

- 1). Help financing the study of our cadre Maddi Mina Djara in Seminary of PCK (Kosin). He almost finishes his study in university now. He has interest in learning theology and he is called to serve the Lord. In our local church he is active in youth service. He is also fluent on English because he was once in Canada for three month in a youth exchange program. Br. John Bosveld has personally known brother Maddi well.

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Our reason for choosing the Seminary of PCK (Kosin) beside the lower cost compared to Canada or Netherlands, is because PCK is the sister church of FRCA and FRCA and both churches also support the seminary. Therefore we do not doubt the seminary in terms of doctrinal matters. Besides, we also see that the seminary has a quality and missionary program and has more experience in an Asian context Missiologi.

- 2). The development of theological education in NTT.

We propose that RCN and FRCA to discuss the development of theological education and to make it as a project to be jointly helped by both church. We also both church can; the portion of both churches in this project also needs to be clarified either in terms of man power or in terms of financial.

- 3). Sumba Timur and Sabu as 'Mission Field' for FRCA.

In this regard, we suggest FRCA and RCN (Lib) to discuss and make a joint policy on how to assist GGRI-NTT in the field of evangelization to the heathen. We realize that GGRI-NTT is still very weak in terms of human or financial resources.

May this synod proceed well and may through the decisions taken the churches be edified, the ecclesiastical relations be strengthened and the Name of Triune God be glorified. The Lord blesses us.

Thank you and Immanuel.

Kupang, June 2003

Deputies of Relations of GGRI-NTT,

Rev Madah Biha
Chairman

Response to the speech of Madah Biha, as presented by Reverend Dr Boersema, on behalf of Synod by Reverend PKA de Boer

Thankyou for the greetings you sent from your churches and the word of encouragement for synod to deal with all its matters according to God's Word as maintained in the adopted confessions. Although we may live far apart and in different economic conditions, it is a rich blessing to be joined together in the same bond of faith. You do well to direct us to remain firmly on this foundation. We live in the midst of a broken and crooked world with many temptations. We use modern technology and have many opportunities for high education. We continually need to remind ourselves to receive the word of our Lord with a child-like faith. We thank you for your prayers and ask that you continue to remember us in our prayers. Satan continues to attack and we need the Lord's help so that we may remain true to the faith.

We are very well aware of your financial situation and understand that it was not out carelessness or unwillingness that you send no delegate. We are thankful for how the Lord has planted His word in your hearts and pray that He will continue to strengthen you in your faith and grant you the courage to apply it in your daily life. We consider it a privilege that we may support Pila Njuka to study theology in Canada. We are thankful for his faithfulness, diligence and progress. Just recently we received a report of his work and he is doing well. It is our prayer that some day soon br. Njuka may be a blessing among the Indonesia Churches. You suggest that it may be helpful if we could help support a student to study in Korea. Our deputies have not yet had the time to fully consider this request. A number of questions arise in our mind, such as, would it not be better that the Indonesian students study in English rather than Korean?

We appreciate what you are doing in Sumba towards making the gospel known to the heathen. We encourage you to continue with this work. We pray that the Lord will bless it. You ask whether we will give financial support to this work. We cannot answer that question because we have not yet considered it. The churches here in Australia will have to consider well how this should be done; through synod deputies or by individual local churches.

We understand that those whom you send to do this work need good training. You also need faithful ministers to serve in your churches. For this reason theological training has been on your mind and consumed much time at your synods. Here too, we would like to encourage you and give help. We have already been helping by sending students to study theology overseas with the hope that they would eventually be able to starting teaching theology among you. Now that br. Njuka is nearing the completion of his studies, the question that arises in the minds of deputies here in Australia is whether the Australian churches should continue to send more students overseas or perhaps start looking at possibly supporting theological training in Indonesia. You have been

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considering several options; whether to continue the lower training in Sumba, set up higher training in Timor. We realize that among you the question of theological training in Timor has to do with your relation to the GGRC. We urge both you, the GGRI and the GGRC to remove any obstacles for working together as soon as possible. In fact, some time ago we were thankful for some indication that you were working towards forming one bond of churches. We continue you to urge you to work towards the aim of ecclesiastical unity to which the Lord calls us. We understand that it is not always easy to achieve this unity in the brokenness of this life.

We know very well how difficult it is to achieve true ecclesiastical unity. Your representative, Rev. Boersema, witnessed how we struggled again at this synod in a real desire to be faithful to the Lord in this matter. When emotions started to show among us while debating this matter, we realize among ourselves how close to our heart the desire to remain faithful to the Lord in inter-church relation really is. You urge us to reconsider our withdrawal from the ICRC. Our Dutch sister churches have also urged us. If you witnessed how we struggled at this synod concerning inter-church relations, perhaps you will understand how a previous synod could decide on the grounds of unrest amongst ourselves we have withdrawn from this organization.

We understand that Rev. Boersema, your representative, will be visiting you soon. We wish him the Lord's protection on his travels and through him extend our greetings to you. It is our prayer that the Lord continue to gather, defend and preserve His church all over the world, also in Indonesia. We know that we all during this age continue to suffer from many weaknesses caused by sin. Together with you and the church of all ages we look forward to the great and glorious day of our Lord.

Reverend PKA deBoer.

Appendix 2 - Text of appeals against Article 93, Acts of Synod 2000 Agenda Item 8b, 8d, 8k and 8w.

Agenda Item 8b Appeal 4: The Consistory of the Free Reformed Church of Byford requests Synod 2003 to declare that the *adopted* decision of Article 93, Acts of Synod 2000, is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order.

GROUND:

1. Synod made a decision to agree (“in principle”) to the proposal of West Albany, effectively making the decision (although postponing the implementation). Yet Synod, via deputies, wants to *“elicit and assess responses from the churches regarding this decision”*. This is contradictory and not church-orderly and goes against the principle of Article 30 of the Church Order that the churches need to have dealt with it first. If the churches disagree with this decision, the only way to change this decision is by appeal, since the decision has already been made. It is not church-orderly to ask for responses on the one hand and make the decision (even in principle) on the other hand.
2. In Ground 2 of the decision of Article 93, Synod recognises that *“the churches have not had a great deal of time to interact with West Albany’s proposal since it was submitted to the churches just prior to the closing date for submissions to Synod”*. Apparently, some churches could not deal with it at all prior to Synod because of the insufficient time given (eg. FRC Byford secretary received the proposals on the 12th and 13th June 2000 and Synod opened on the 3rd July 2000). This is contrary to Article 30 (Church Order) which states *“A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it”*.
3. This decision, even though it states that the proposal of West Albany “is in agreement with Art 67 of Acts 1985” (Ground 2 of Art 93), does not interact with that or other previous decisions which are affected and does not substantiate the claim that it “is in agreement”. According to Article 33 of the Church Order, *“Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds”*. No new grounds have been provided. Previous synod decisions must be upheld in proposals and decisions; the only alternative is first by way of appeal where *“whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order”* (Article 31, Church Order).
4. In the decision, Synod gives deputies the mandate to *“see whether the RCNZ will enter into fraternal relationship with the FRCA”*. This mandate is contrary to Articles 67 and 74 of Acts of Synod 1985 which only identifies one type of relationship, namely “sister-church

relationship”, that is associated with the recognition of “true and faithful Church”. Synod 2000 may not mandate beyond previous synod’s decisions but must abide by them according to Article 33 of the Church Order which states that *“Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds”*.

5. Synod 2000 made the decision (“in principle”) to *“recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (as per proposal of West Albany). This is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions and the Church Order.

- a) The Reformed Churches of New Zealand currently maintain a sister church relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). Article 72 of Acts of Synod 2000 of our churches indicates that *“Recent decisions of the CRCA Synod regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord’s Table, the change in the CO and the dealings of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA with respect to Rev FJ VanHulst, a minister recently deposed from one of our churches on the grounds that his teachings were contrary to Scripture show that the CRCA churches continue to travel down the path of deformation”*. In Article 28 of the Belgic Confession we confess that *“it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the Church and to join this assembly wherever God has established it.”* It is therefore the duty of the RCNZ to separate themselves from the CRCA by breaking off their sister church relationship.

- b) Scripture teaches us that the unity in Christ has to be a unity in the truth. *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth. ... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”* [John 17: 17-21]. *“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* [Eph 4: 1 – 6]. It is important to maintain unity in the relations we have with other churches. Because of the relations between the RCNZ and the CRCA, it is not possible for us to have unity with the RCNZ, and hence, also indirectly with the CRCA (see Ground (a) above).

In the proposal of West-Albany it is stated that the churches involved “shall accept one another’s attestation, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.” (proposal West Albany, decision 2 point 4). In a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ at a moment that the RCNZ still have a sister relationship with the CRCA it is possible that one of the local churches within the RCNZ issues an attestation to the FRCA and the CRCA. The relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA is at odds with Ephesians 4: 1-6 [see above] and 1Cor 6: 14-18: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God ... Therefore “come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.”*

- c) Synod 1985 (Article 67) decided that our declaration of another church as being *“true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ... has as direct consequence that a sister-church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying on the road to a practical realisation of unity”*. Yet the West Albany proposal recognises that a sister church relationship is not possible yet, but that we need *“to continue to strive for a sister relationship with the RCNZ, recognising that it may take some time for the third party relationship between the RCNZ and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (former RCA) to be resolved.”*
 - d) Synod 1998 (Article 89) recognised that *“the relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed churches of New Zealand.”* Because this relationship between these two churches still exists, it is therefore against this synod decision to now establish official relations (ie. either sister relations, fraternal relations or other) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
6. Synod made the decision (“in principle”) to *“offer to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ”* (as per proposal of West Albany). This is contrary to the Church Order.

- a) Synod 1985 (Article 74) decided *“as there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister-Churches and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of sister-church relationship ...”*. Further, Synod 1985 (Article 67) decided *“that our recognition of another Church as being ‘true and faithful Church of the Lord Jesus Christ’ has as a direct consequence that a sister-Church relationship can be established...”*. Hence our churches only have one form of relationship associated with the recognition of “true and faithful Church”. Article 33 of the Church Order states that *“Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds”*. It is therefore against Article 33 of the Church Order for synod to make a decision that disregards its previous decisions.
- b) Synod made a decision introducing a new level of church relations (ie. fraternal relations), a new matter, without giving all the churches the opportunity to interact with it. This is contrary to Article 30 (Church Order) which states *“A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it”*.

Agenda Items 8d Appeal of Rockingham against Art 93 of the 2000 Synod to rescind the decision (made in principle) to offer fraternal relations with the RCNZ, and to wait patiently until sister church relations can be established in accordance with the previous decisions of Synod.

Grounds:

1. The decision made in Article 93 of Synod 2000 is contrary to Article 57 of the Church Order.

- 1.1. Synod 2000 already recognised this and therefore gave the deputies the mandate *“to consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg. Art 57) and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations regarding the establishment of fraternal relations.”* By this mandate, it is clear that Synod agreed in principle to something that was (and still is) contrary to the accepted order of the churches. Good order requires that the order of the Churches be changed first. Thereafter Synod is permitted to make decisions in accordance with the changed order.
- 1.2. Article 81 Church Order states, *“these articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to*

be changed, augmented or diminished.” Yet the change required in Article 57 CO as a result of the decision of Synod 2000 (Art 93) is a substantial change that departs from the rule that we admit as guests to the Lord’s Supper only those members of sister churches who present a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct. The proposal (which Synod agreed to in principle) provided grounds to establish a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ. But the proposal did not contain any specific request or provide any study or grounds that would warrant Synod’s mandate to the deputies to consider the necessary changes that would amount to a substantial departure from the longstanding order.

2. The decision made in Article 93 of Synod 2000 is contrary to Article 67 of Synod 1985.

The decision of Synod 2000 to agree in principle to the proposal to declare the RCNZ true and faithful churches also had the direct consequence that a fraternal relationship would be established between the RCNZ and the FRCA. In a way, the decision of Synod 2000 could be seen to agree with the general tenor of the earlier decision of Synod 1985 (Art 67) which states: *“The recognition of another church as being true and faithful Church of our Lord Jesus Christ...has as direct consequence that a sister church relationship can be established.”* Synod 2000 desired to maintain the principle of giving concrete expression of unity with the verbal expression of unity. Nevertheless, Synod 2000 did not maintain the actual decision of Article 67 of Synod 1985 that speaks about full “sister-church” relations, and not a lesser “fraternal” relationship.

3. The decision made in Article 93 of Synod 2000 disagrees with an earlier decision of Synod 1992 (Art 95).

Synod 1992 phased out multi-level relationships. These multi-level relationships were established for two reasons: 1) for conformity with the Netherlands, and 2) because these ‘secondary’ level relationships were formed because of *“the reluctance of reformed churches with a Presbyterian form of government to adopt our rules for sister church relations....”* Synod decided to phase out multi-level relationships, because *“as a rule we should not have problems in offering sister relations once recognition as true churches is made by Synod.”* In this way Synod 1992 put into practice again the decision of Synod 1985 (Art 67) that the recognition of a church as true and faithful has the consequence that a ‘sister’ church relationship can be established. Synod 2000 has acted contrary to this decision of 1992 by re-introducing (in principle) multi-level relationships.

4. The decision made in Article 93 of Synod 2000 disagrees with grounds upon which Synod has made previous decisions.

Grounds 1 of the decision of Article 89 Acts 1998 reads: *“As past Synods have stated, ‘The relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand’ (cf Deputies Report to Synod 1996, Acts, Appendix B3, 5.3, p 101). As the Reformed Churches of New Zealand’s Synodical and Correspondence Committee points out in a Report to their Synod (Mangere, 1986): “Relationships must be true in all dimensions. ...This is being consistent with the principle of a true and faithful church and consequential thinking, as otherwise there would be a triangular problem when A and B establish close relationships while C who already has an intimate relationship with A still has principle objections to B.”*

Agenda Item 8k Mount Nasura - Appeal to Synod 2003, against Article 93 of Acts of Synod 2000

The Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura requests Synod to declare that the decision recorded in Article 93 of Synod 2000 Acts is contrary to Scripture, the Confessions, the Church Order, contradicts previous synod decisions, and places an untenable practical inconsistency on the churches; and is therefore rescinded and declared void.

Grounds:

I. The decision in Article 93 is contrary to Scripture:

- a. *Australia* - a bond of churches to which the Free Reformed Churches have publicly appealed to return to Reformed and thus Scriptural teachings and practices.
Scripture teaches that false teachings and doctrines are to be rejected (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; Titus 3:10; Revelation 2:20.) Along with these scriptural norms comes the warning in 1 Corinthians 5:6 that *a little leaven leavens the whole lump*.
We note here that our 1998 Synod mandated deputies to *explain to them ... the difficulties our churches have in establishing sister relations with them ...* and gives as grounds 1 The RCNZ maintain sister-church relations with the *Christian Reformed Churches of*. As past Synods have stated: *“the relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.”* (Acts, Article 89.3.a)

- b. The proposal of the Church at West Albany that was adopted in principle recognises *the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This decision implies Synod's acceptance as scriptural the RCNZ practice defined in their Church Order Article 61 that *Persons belonging to denominations other than sister churches may be admitted as guests at the Lord's Table only if the session has ascertained that they profess the true religion and walk uprightly*.

This practice does however contradict how Scripture teaches the Lord's Table to be the communion of the body and blood of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16-17). So long as there is no *communion* as taught in 1 Corinthians 12, nor unity as taught in Ephesians 4, in practice, to sit at the same *communion table* is dishonest to the Lord. Those who are members of other 'denominations' that do not show the marks of the true church as maintained from God's Word in the Confessions do not practice communion nor unity as taught in these scripture passages.

- c. The Church of Mount Nasura also draws to your attention that the 1998 Synod of the RCNZ received a study report from its deputies about guests at the Lord's Supper. This report proposed that synod adopt the following guideline:
- a) That the guest is not a member of a false church.
 - b) That the guest upholds the three marks of the true church and deplores all departures from the 'three marks' (BCF Article 29), even if such departures should be found in his own church.
 - c) That the guest is a communicant member in good standing in his own church.
 - d) That the guest lives a repentant, upright and godly life.
 - e) That the guest trusts in Christ, and in Christ alone, for his salvation.
 - f) That no guest be admitted who professes doctrines contrary to our confessions, or holds to practices, such that any member of our churches with the same doctrine or practices would be prevented by the elders from participation in the Supper.

While all the above points were proposed, the RCNZ synod decided to adopt only c), d) and e). Synod gave some attention to the other points of the above proposal and came to the following decision:

Synod adopted the following guidelines concerning admission of guests to the Lord's Table, building on those adopted by, Synod 1992 (Art. 61. b)

- a. *The corporate unity expressed in the Lord's Supper is also a unity in the truth that we profess.*
- b. *Sessions should ensure that guests to the Lord's Supper do not openly oppose the truth that is taught in our Confessions.*

- c. It is the responsibility of the session to ascertain the following before it grants permission to guests to participate in the Lord's Supper. 1) That the guest trusts in Christ, and in Christ alone for his salvation 2) That the guest is a communicant member in good standing in his own church. 3) That the guest lives a repentant, upright and godly life.*

The above decision shows that even though this guideline restricts who may come to the Lord's Supper, an opening is left for anyone of any other denomination to attend. It is both sad and striking that this synod refused to adopt a), b) and f) of the original proposal. By not adopting these points the RCNZ shows that it does not want to fully abandon church pluriformity in its practice of admitting guests to the Lord's Supper.

Concerning the adopted 'guideline', one may also wonder what authority it has among the churches. Is it an addition to the adopted *Church Order*, or is it only to be received as an advisable way to implement the *Church Order* leaving the churches free whether to follow this 'guideline'?

The FRCA will find themselves practising the same inconsistency, should they permit other than members of sister churches to the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Agenda Item 8w The church of Kelmscott appeals against Article 93 of the Acts of Synod 2000, dealing with the RCNZ. We consider that this decision is not according to the Word of God and the adopted Church Order, and therefore seek to have it rescinded.

1. Synod 2000 decided "*to agree in principle to the proposal of West Albany, but to postpone the implementation of this decision until the next synod in order to give deputies the opportunity....*"
In Art 80 of the Church Order the churches have agreed that "No church shall in any way lord it over other churches...." Yet with this decision Synod 2000 instructed Synod 2003 what it should do, be it if deputies could satisfy certain criteria.
2. Synod 2000 decided to offer 'fraternal relations' to the RCNZ.
Synod 1992 (Art 95, Recommendation 5) decided to phase out all inter-church relations other than 'sister relations'. Despite this decision, Synod 2000 sought to form a new sort of inter-church relation. Meanwhile, the correctness of the 1992 decision has never been challenged.

3. Synod 2000 decided to pursue a formal relationship with the RCNZ while these churches have close ties with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia.
Synod 1998 supported its decision re not establishing sister relations with the RCNZ (Decision 3a) with this Ground: “1. As past Synods have stated, *‘The relationship of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Church of Australia is an impediment for us to establish official relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand....’*” With its decision, Synod 2000 did not stay in the path described by Synod 1998.
Admittedly, Synod 2000 in Grounds 2 makes the statement that “...the proposal of West Albany is in accordance with previous Synod decisions which have seen the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA as an impediment to sister church relations, and is in agreement with Art 67 of Acts 1985....” However, this is no more than a statement, with no verification.
4. The decision of Synod 2000 to offer fraternal relations to the RCNZ (on the basis of the Rules suggested by West Albany) could lead in theory to an RCNZ visitor attending Holy Supper at a CRC congregation in the morning and the same sacrament in one of our congregations in the afternoon. This would not be good order (contrary to 1 Corinthians 14:40), and certainly be confusing to our church membership.

Appendix 3 – Deputies Report on Australian Version of Book of Praise

Deputies appointed by Synod West Albany 2000:
D Pot (convenor), E Swarts, W Amoraal

Synod West Albany in 2000 appointed deputies with the mandate to investigate publishing our own version of the *Book of Praise*, printed for the Australian churches.

- A** Deputies investigated the following:
 - 1. Ownership of copyright of psalms and hymns
 - 2. Modifying texts and forms as required for printing the Australian version of the *Book of Praise*.
 - 3. Estimated demand for an Australian *Book of Praise*
 - 4. Cash flow Analysis
- B** Conclusion and recommendations

A. 1. Ownership of copyright

- i. Parties who have copyright to the current *Book of Praise*:
 - 1. The Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*, as appointed by the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC sister churches)
 - 2. brother W Helder who owns the copyright to a number of psalms and hymns.
 - 3. brother DeGroot had ownership of copyright to Hymn 1A. This has been transferred to the above mentioned Standing Committee.
- ii. The Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* has given permission to use the material they have copyright to. They only require acknowledgement in the Australian *Book of Praise*.ⁱⁱ Brother W Helder has outlined his suggested fees for the use of Psalms and Hymns under his copyrightⁱⁱⁱ.

2. Modifying texts and forms as required for printing the Australian version of the *Book of Praise*

In order to adjust text quotes in the Heidelberg Catechism, other confessions, forms, and other related pages, we have worked on commercial typesetting rates. It is difficult to obtain an accurate price because some pages will need only a few words changed while other pages require substantial changes. The page size too is smaller than the standard A4 normally quoted on for commercial work.

Premier Printing in Canada is the printer of the current *Book of Praise*. Brother W Gortemaker has been very cooperative and forthcoming with information^{iv}. A number of the computer files have already been made available by him so that we could get a more accurate idea of artwork requirements. Deputies gratefully acknowledge Br W Gortemaker's cooperation.

The price budgeted in the cash-flow calculations is \$10,000.- This is an estimation only, with a built-in margin for the unforeseen.

Synod could ask Pro Ecclesia Printers to take on the work of making changes (according to stipulations), provide art work and have the books printed. Potential cost savings could be made on the various aspects of the project if voluntary labour within our churches would be utilised.

3. Estimated demand for an Australian *Book of Praise*

Deputies informally contacted the various schools and bookshops in our circles in order to obtain data about the annual consumption of the *Book of Praise*. Those contacted have not all responded to our request. From the estimates obtained^v it can be estimated that about 400-450 copies would be sold in the first year. An annual increase in demand of 5% is anticipated.

It would be unrealistic to expect all churches and schools to discard their current copies of the *Book of Praise* if an Australian version were to be made available. Apart from the inhibitive cost factor we have also learned from the change of Bible translation we went through some years ago, that replacement is usually progressive.

4. Cash Flow Analysis

The supplied spreadsheet gives a detailed analysis of the costing and funding of an Australian *Book of Praise*. Certain assumptions were made:

- Sales are expected to increase by 5% annually. This is based on growth in the number of church members in our churches.
- Interest rate of 5% was used to calculate loan costs. Loans for this printing project could be obtained from among our membership as has been done for other projects in the past as for example Fair Haven. The Emeritus Fund is another avenue. The 5% would give a higher than commercial return at present and at the same time provide a cheaper than commercial loan rate.

Appendix 3 - Report Deputies Book of Praise

- Annual price increase of the *Books of Praise* is set at 3%. This is deemed a realistic estimate in our current economic climate and equates to the CPI rate.

Printing cost:

- Premier Printing provided us with prices as they were applied over their past print run in Canada. Details are somewhat commercially sensitive but are available for the archives.
- Stamford Press in Singapore, an international printing firm used by Pro Ecclesia Printers, was asked to provide a quote on the *Book of Praise* sent to them with the proviso that all artwork was provided ready-to-print. A hardcopy book was selected for this. Their quoted price and details are included^{vi}.

Miscellaneous costs:

- Storage of initial purchased order
- Insurance for stored books
- Typesetting (as explained in A2)
- Copyright costs (as explained in A1)

B Conclusion and recommendations

CONCLUSION:

As can be concluded from the cost analyses spreadsheet provided, the Australian *Book of Praise* could be produced at a cost of around \$ 13.65/each for an initial print run of 5000 copies. For a print run of 2500 the cost would be around the \$17.20/each. The 2500 copies would probably last some 5 years and the 5000 copies just over 9 years. That effectively means that a reprint needs to be instigated after about 4 and 8 years respectively.

The prices above show to be very competitive with the current prices of imported Canadian copies.

Please note that Pro Ecclesia Bookshop in Armadale currently sells the *Book of Praise* for \$26.50

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Deputies be relieved from their duties
2. Synod decides to publish the Australian *Book of Praise*
3. A standing committee for the Australian *Book of Praise* is appointed. Their task would be:
 - To obtain official permission from the copyright owners
 - To produce an acceptable Australian version of the *Book of Praise* with the texts adapted to reflect the Bible translation we use and the variations in other documents as agreed to by our previous Australian Synods

- To publish, distribute and market the Australian *Book of Praise* within the perimeters of the cash-flow analysis before the end of the year 2005
- To administer the financial aspects

Grounds:

1. The Canadian *Book of Praise* is in content not exactly according to what we use
2. Possible future changes in the Canadian *Book of Praise* over which we have no control would not affect us if we had our own Australian version
3. Our children would learn phrases and text quotes from the Heidelberg Catechism in a bible translation they normally are taught from in church and school
4. Cost of printing our own version does not pose extra cost to our members

This report humbly submitted by deputies:

D Pot
E Swarts
W Amoraal

i

Article 54 Acts of Synod 2000

Book of Praise

Material:

Agenda item 9.14 Proposal from Mt Nasura

Decision:

To accede to the request of Mt Nasura that deputies be appointed to look into the possibility of having an edition of the *Book of Praise* printed for the Australian churches. Such an edition would include the Bible references in the prose section from the New King James Version, the particulars of the Australian Churches in the confessions (eg the word *Christian*) in the Apostles' Creed and the wording of the *Form for Ordination of elders and Deacons* as well as the *Australian Church Order*.

Grounds:

An Australian Synod (1996) endorsed the use of the New King James Version as the faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches.

With today's use of computer technology in printing such a special edition of the *Book of Praise* may be well possible.

ADOPTED

ii

Standing Committee for the Book of Praise

c/o C. Bosch sec. 505 Enfield Rd. Burlington ON

Appendix 3 - Report Deputies Book of Praise

Canada, L7T 2X5

FRCA Deputies for an
Australian Book of Praise
C/o D. Pot

June 12,2002

Dear Brothers in Christ;

Greetings from the Can. Ref. SCBP and our prayer that all may be well with you. We apologize for the delay in answering your request of some weeks ago requesting, "permission to edit, publish and print a Book of Praise for the Australian Churches".

The SCBP grant this request with the following stipulations and suggestions:

1. Your proposed book of praise should have a different title from that of our own.
2. Your book should have a statement that the BoP committee of the CanRC has permitted the Australian churches to use their material.
3. You need to get permission to use the Psalm and Hymn arrangements of: W. Helder (84 SanAntonio Driver, Hamilton, ON L90C 5N2, ph. 905- 388-2370) as well as M. DeGroot who has the copyright to Hymn! A. The latter is in a nursing home and we suggest contacting his son, Menno DeGroot - 2303 Fassel Ave., Burlington, ON., L7R 3P4. ph. 905-637-6269)
- 4 You would of course have to contact Premier Printing re. printing of your proposed book.

Some additional information re. copyright etc. appears below.

Copyright subsists in Canada immediately upon creation, and without registration, in every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including computer programs, databases, multimedia works, books, photographs, advertisements, logos, and sound recordings.

A copyright owner has the exclusive right to control the work's (a) reproduction, in whole or substantial part, in any material form (including electronic form), (b) public performance, (c) public telecommunication, (d) publication, (e) translation, and (f) adaptation. The owner may also prohibit the distribution of unlawful copies. The Act also provides an author with moral rights, which enable the author to demand credit as creator of the work and to prohibit changes to the work, or its use with any product or service, that would detrimentally affect the author's reputation.

How Long Does It Last?

In North America, as a general rule, copyright expires 50 years after the year in which the last author dies. There are some exceptions, most notably copyright in photographs and sound recordings expires 50 years after the year in which those works were created. Moral rights exist for the same period of time as the copyright.

Who Owns The Copyright?

The author is generally the first owner of the copyright, but exceptions do exist. For example, copyright in works created by employees in the course of their employment are

owned by the employer.

The SCBP does not consider itself as owning copyright to the Creeds and Confessions which may be said to belong to Christ's Holy Catholic Church. Our updated Forms (NIV texts) and Prayers (some modernization of language) will be presented to the next Synod of the CanRC.

Wishing you God's blessing on your deliberations
On Behalf of the SCBP
Chris Bosch, sec.

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84 San Antonio Drive
Hamilton, ON
Canada L9C 5N2

August 16, 2002

Deputies for an Australian Book of Praise
Mr. D. Pot, Convenor
P.O. Box 189
Kelmescott 6991, WA
Australia

Dear brothers,

Thank you for the e-mail message dated August 14, 2002, in which brother Pot, on behalf of your committee, asks me to indicate what I would consider to be a "fair and reasonable" reimbursement for "the copyright for [my] share of psalms and hymns" intended for publication in an Australian Book of Praise.

First of all, a clarification is in order. What your committee appears to be requesting is permission to use my copyrighted material. As in the case of the Canadian Book of Praise, there would be no transfer of the copyright as such. No doubt this is also what you are implying, but the wording of your message seems somewhat ambiguous perhaps.

Keeping in mind what others judged to be fair and reasonable as long ago as 1978 (see my memo dated August 8), I have come to the conclusion that, all things considered, a fee of \$75 (Canadian) per psalm or hymn would be eminently fair and reasonable in the year 2002. If you decide to use all forty-five items listed in my letter dated August 7, 2002, the total would therefore be C\$3375.00. Should you decide to replace some of my versions with other metrical psalms and hymns, this amount would be proportionately reduced, of course, at the above-mentioned rate of C\$75 per item. (Point of possible interest in this connection: The average length of the forty-five psalms and songs is 47.2 lines.)

In addition, it may be useful to spell out the stipulations that should apply, as I see it:

Appendix 3 - Report Deputies Book of Praise

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia would have permission to use the copyrighted material in the proposed edition of an Australian Book of Praise, in any subsequent reprints of this edition, as well as in any future editions and reprints thereof.

As author of the above-mentioned forty-five metrical psalms and hymns, I would retain the copyright. Such is normal practice. The editors or publishers of the proposed publication would therefore not have the right to make any changes in the text unilaterally.

Acknowledgment of copyright would be included in the proposed publication as it is on pages 433-35 of the Canadian Book of Praise.

Until now you have communicated with me by means of informal and unofficial e-mail messages; however, I think that at some point it would be appropriate for your committee to prepare an official letter or signed document indicating what you are agreeing to--that is, if you do decide to use my material. I would also appreciate your sending me, in due time, one courtesy copy of your Australian Book of Praise.

I trust that this is more or less the response that you were expecting and I shall look forward to hearing from you again.

Yours sincerely,
William Helder

iviv

Email received from W Gortemaker
Monday, July 29, 2002 11:23 PM
Subject: Re: book of praise Australia

Here is our reply to the questions you're asking regarding the Book of Praise publication: Our normal commercial typesetting rate is Can\$50.00 per hour.

The time required to make the changes will depend on the number of changes per page. I have no idea what you are changing.

We have the text and the Psalms currently available on computer. The Hymns are in a construction stage. We can make the text available in a Quark format, and we can email the file to you or burn a CD and send it to you.

You can take this information and have it printed where ever you wish. If you are asking us to print we would need the information regarding the changes and then we can give you an estimate.

The approximate costs for printing 2500,5000,10000, are respectively without the changes: \$8.00; 7.50; 6.75.

The best volume in your circumstance would be 5000 in our opinion.

The cost per copy retail is \$19.00, church-members \$13.25, bookstores \$11.40, large volume buyers \$9.10

Hopefully this answers some of your questions.
W Gortemaker

^vAnnual consumption estimates:

Armada Bookshop - 250

Albany Bookshop - 120

Tasmania bookshop - 40-50

vi

Sent: Thursday, November 28, 2002 12:28 PM

Subject: Re: quotation

Hi Willem

Thanks for waiting and we have worked out the quotation based on your sample.

For 2,500 copies - SGD \$19,000/- Unit price : \$7.60

For 3000 copies - SGD \$22,500/- Unit price : \$7.50

Above prices are quoted based on the complete layout supplied by you in CD.

We can only match your red cover material with the closest material available here.

Similarly, we have the inside paper that are quite the same as your sample inside text pages.

Lastly, we do not have the facilities here to do the pinkish colour edging on the inside pages.

We only have the gold/silver edging but the cost is very costly. (approx : SDG \$0.80 per book)

Hope our prices are competitive!

Do you need me to find out the estimated shipping cost for you?

Regards

James Seah
Stamford Press
Singapore

Appendix 4 - Reports by Deputies Relations Churches Abroad (Reformed Churches)

Appendix 4a - Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

1. Mandate:

- 1.1. To receive the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia's anticipated appeal to the FRCA, to seek clarification regarding this appeal if necessary, and to forward the CRCA's appeal to our next Synod with a recommended response.
- 1.2. To address the CRCA Synod about recent decisions of the CRCA regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's Supper, their amendment of the CO restricting the binding character of the CO, and the decision of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA to allow Rev. FJ van Hulst to preach in that classical resort, explaining why these decisions are in error.

Grounds:

1. Deputies have had "a few face-to-face" meetings to convey the FRCA appeal to the CRCA sessions and synod.
2. Extracts from the Acts of the CRCA indicate that the CRCA intend to submit an appeal to us.
3. Recent decisions of the CRCA Synod regarding women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's Table, the change in the CO and the dealings of Classis Tasmania of the CRCA with respect to Rev. FJ van Hulst, a minister recently deposed from one of our churches on the grounds that his teachings were contrary to Scripture show that the CRCA churches continue to travel down the path of deformation

2. Activities

Along with Synod, Deputies had expected to receive an appeal from the CRCA. However the Committee dialogue FRCA chose only to repeat in an undated letter (2002) mostly what their Synod 2000 had already said i.e *"to appeal to your Synod, to carefully re-examine your understanding of the nature of the New Testament church. We believe your views are not consistent with Scripture and confessions in this area, and that your views are causing you to be increasingly isolated from other Reformed churches as our deputies outlined in one of their papers"*.

Deputies responded on 24th December as follows:

Following your Synod decisions regarding the FRCA, we had expected that you would furnish us with an appeal substantiated with reasons why you consider our understanding of the nature of the New

Appendix 4 - Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

Testament Church is not consistent with Scripture and Confession. Instead you only repeat to us Synod's decision. This leaves this allegation hanging without substantiation or proof. You did refer to a discussion paper presented at our meetings, but did not refer to the fact that this paper was adequately refuted by us and found to make erroneous assumptions.

We consider that matter now rests with you and we look to further clarification of your appeal.

The 2002 letter from the CRCA also expressed concern that “on any areas in which we differ from you (e.g having a variety of liturgical forms, preaching the gospel at funerals, more hymns in our hymnal), that you consider us to be in error”. Further they accuse us of elevating non-essential points in order to reject their churches, contrary to our CO art 46. In our response to the CRCA we have refuted this caricature, pointing out that where in isolation, non-essential points may be mentioned in our appeal, they are used to denote a symptom of a greater malaise.

Also in relation to the FRCA position regarding sister church relationships, the CRCA repeat the false accusation that the FRCA holds the notion “*that she cannot entertain sister church relationship with any church, if (the FRCA) cannot have sister church relations with all its sister churches*”. This absurd notion was adequately refuted by previous FRCA deputies, but unfortunately the same accusation was aired by the CRCA delegates at the floor of the RCNZ synod, when our deputies again had to reject such insinuation.

In our reply to the CRCA we wrote:

It is, however, correct as stated in our appeal “the FRCA will consider the validity of the relations which a church has established with other churches (i.e. so called third party relations) when considering to enter into and continuing relations with them.” As was made clear in the discussions, your membership of the REC and relations with a number of unfaithful churches would indeed be a stumbling block to us.

The Dialogue Committee of the CRCA has responded to our letter, failing to explain why their ‘appeal’ to us is submitted without any substantiation and picking up on the words “stumbling block” as used above, to place them in a different context and to come to the conclusion “*it is now clear that the FRCA will not have a relationship with us because of our continued involvement in the REC*”. They then make the observation that “*your stance makes future discussions about a possible relationship between the CRCA and the FRCA futile*”.

Appendix 4 - Deputies Relations Reformed Churches

When the CRCA Committee complain that if we write of “*symptoms of a greater malaise or trend*” that these trends are unnamed, then it becomes clear to us that the CRCA has not taken our detailed appeal presented through them to their synod seriously. The CRCA conclude that “*future discussions are unlikely to be productive and would not warrant the time and resources that we might put into them*”.

It is with sadness that deputies have to make the same conclusion. Whilst the CRCA refuses to heed our appeals, does not respond effectively, rather choosing to minimise the seriousness of them and misrepresents our position on crucial points, we also must conclude future discussions are not productive.

Deputies had as mandate to further address the CRCA synod regarding decisions on women in the office of deacon, children at the Lord's Supper and their amendment of the CO restricting the binding character of the CO. Although some work has been done to fulfil this mandate, deputies see no value in continuing further.

Deputies however have written to the CRCA Synod regarding the position of Rev FJ van Hulst

3. Recommendation

1. Synod decide that deputies have completed their mandate to send appeals to the CRCA and since it has become clear the appeals are either unheard or rejected by the CRCA, further contact with the CRCA is not warranted.



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Association for
Christian
Tertiary Education

A.B.N. 21 087 541 084

*"Teaching with life to the
love of God"*

29 May, 2003

Mr. J.L. van Buijzel,
Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad,
P.O. Box 191,
Armidale, W.A. 6992

Dear brothers,

The Synod of the CRCA has just concluded its proceedings and I thought I would introduce myself and at the same time convey the decisions of Synod in connection with our relationship and your communication of 30 April. Synod has appointed me to be the Ecumenical Secretary of the CRCA, succeeding Rev. David Groenenboom who has come to the end of his term, after having served faithfully in this capacity for 9 years.

I am an ordained minister of the CRCA and Principal of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, where I have taught for the past 23 years. Prior to that I spent 11 years in Indonesia as a missionary. I should also mention my association with the Reformed Ecumenical Council of which I was an executive member for 12 years. I know that would not encourage you, but please do not prejudice me on that issue. Like you, I am firmly committed to the historic Reformed faith and equally concerned about the general decline in many denominations. I trust that if our paths would cross or we have mutual interests that we could accept each other as brothers in the faith.

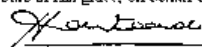
In connection with your letter of 30 April which was also brought to the attention of Synod, I need to inform you that Rev. van Hulst was indeed an observer at our Synod and that he is allowed to preach in the churches in Tasmania. It was reported at Synod that Classis Tasmania followed due process and examined Rev. van Hulst as to his soundness in doctrine. Classis Tasmania concluded that his doctrinal commitment to Scripture and Confession were beyond reproach and on that basis gave him licence to preach and teach.

I also need to inform you what our Synod decided as far as our mutual relationship is concerned. *Re the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), Synod decided*

1. to concur with the actions taken with regard to the FRCA
2. to note the views of the FRCA with regard to the CRCA:
 1. to acknowledge that at this point further dialogue is no longer productive
 2. to take no further action with regard to dialogue with the FRCA at this time
 3. to advise the FRCA that should their views change, we would be happy to recommence discussion

Brothers, it gives you and us no joy to have to convey this to you. It is a sad reflection on the state of the church that we are not able to walk together more closely. Be assured, however, that we remember you in our prayers and that we look forward to better days ahead when we shall walk together more closely in unity of faith and purpose.

Yours in His grace, on behalf of the CRCA,


Rev. Henk DeWierd

Appendix 4b - Reformed Churches of New Zealand

1. Mandate

Synod West Albany decided:

- a. To see whether the RCNZ will enter into fraternal relationship with the FRCA.
- b. To elicit and assess responses from the churches regarding this decision.
- c. To consider what changes will need to be made to the CO (eg Art 57) and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations regarding the establishment of fraternal relations.
- d. To appoint deputies with the new mandate:
 - i. Encourage the RCNZ to study the appeal sent to the CRCA in order to understand why the FRCA has principle objections in establishing relations with the CRCA and therefore this continues the impediment to forming sister relations with the RCNZ.
 - ii. Continue to dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern.
 - iii. Authorise two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ.
 - iv. Invite delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod.
 - v. Keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ.

Grounds:

1. The delegates from the RCNZ has stated that the RCNZ do not have a second level of inter-church relations.
2. Although the proposal of West Albany is in accordance with previous Synod decisions which have seen the RCNZ's relationship with the CRCA as an impediment to sister church relations, and is in agreement with Art 67 of Acts 1985, the churches have not had time to interact with the West Albany's proposal since it was submitted to the churches just prior to the closing date for submissions to synod.
3. Although the proposal of West Albany received the majority of support from the churches, it is the desire of Synod to work towards a greater consensus by ongoing discussion, according to the rules of Synod.

2. Activities

2.1 Visit to Synod

Two delegates, Rev Veldman and L. van Burgel were delegated to attend the synod of the RCNZ held at Christchurch 27th April to 3rd

May 2002. A report of their visit was published in the *Una Sancta* and is attached to this report as is the address to their synod.

During their visit, the delegates took the opportunity to pass on to the RCNZ the decision of our Synod West Albany 2002 and they met with the Inter Church Relations Committee. The IRC were on a busy schedule and could only spare one meeting with our delegates. From this meeting it seemed to be evident that the RCNZ is beginning to understand the difficulties that the third party relationship of the CRCA has for us to offer a full sister church relationship.

Our deputies also encouraged the RCNZ to be consequential with their dealings with the CRCA if they do not take heed to the warnings of the RCNZ.

The RCNZ have also decided at their synod not to accept a fraternal relation but to wait patiently till the FRCA is ready for full sister church relation. Although they did take the liberty to express their thankfulness to the FRCA for acknowledging them as a true and faithful church even though our delegates had tried to make it clear that the decisions made regarding New Zealand were “in principle” only.

2.2 Responses from the Churches

As mandated by synod, deputies solicited responses from the churches regarding the decisions made by Synod West Albany 2000 regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Three churches (Launceston, Legana and West Kelmscott) did not respond.

Albany considered the Synod decision “to be in keeping with God’s Word and with our Church Order”. It sees the decision to be in keeping with article 46 CO in that there are no impediments for recognition. Albany would have preferred that deputies were mandated to study the matter of third party relationships. It regrets that it’s proposal on this was not taken up by synod. It notes that a triangular relationship such as the FRCA/RCNZ/CRCA is not unique and although there are practical problems, a full sister church relationship should not be ruled out per se.

Armada noted that the RCNZ relationship with the CRCA “was rightly seen as an impediment by Synod 2000”. Armada had difficulty with the decision because “the adopted proposal does pose a lot of unwanted situations contrary to art 57 Church Order”

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(Admission to the Lord's Supper). They recommend to uphold Article 57 CO and to wait for a full sister church relationship with the RCNZ

Bunbury said the decision "is a confusing one and ought not to have been made in the way it has". Bunbury has difficulty in the recognition of the RCNZ as a true and faithful church. They had no difficulty with the recognition of true church but had reservations about "faithful". They raised a number of matters to support this concern, although they admitted that the reservation may be due to lack of clarity on their part. Their matters of concern were: Fencing of the Lord's Table, the re-establishment of unrestricted relations by RCNZ Synod 2000, and the way the RCNZ adheres to the CO in dealing with a number of disruptions. Bunbury would amend rule 2d (accepting attestations) by adding "*The acceptance of such attestations shall not occur without the office bearers first confirming the faithfulness of the persons by way of a home visit*". Bunbury suggests an alternative to fraternal relations. It proposes a suspended sister relations similar to that applying to the CRCA between 1987 and 1990 which restricts acceptance of attestations and calling of ministers.

Byford informed deputies that they intended to appeal the decision. Copies of the appeal are provided separately. Byford also provided a document entitled "developments within the Reformed Churches of New Zealand Since (FRCA) Synod 2000". Included in the document were comments regarding fencing of the Lord's Table, opinions within the RCNZ regarding speaking in tongues, opinions regarding pluriformity of the church, and the Scriptural valuation of Christ's church gathering work in 1944. Deputies took note and responded to Byford about these matters.

Kelmscott indicated it will appeal Art 93.

Mt Nasura indicated it will appeal article 93.

Rockingham also informed deputies that they intended to appeal to synod "*to rescind the decision (made in principle) to offer fraternal relations with the RCNZ...*"

West Albany favour implementation of the decision at this synod. They are of the opinion that the RCNZ have the marks of the true church and therefore our yes should be yes and our no, no. West Albany also put forward some practical advantages to relations with the RCNZ, including the RCNZ intended cooperation with our Canadian sister churches in mission and the enhanced possibilities in areas of training for the ministry and covenantal education.

When we assess the responses from the churches it becomes clear that the churches are divided on the implementation of article 93. Many of the responses from the churches are not in favour of the decision of synod 2000, even to the point where a number of the churches will appeal the decision of synod 2000.

2.3 *Changes to Church Order*

As per our mandate, deputies investigated what changes were required to be made to the Church Order and other ecclesiastical rules and regulations to establish fraternal relations. It did this by requesting Rev van Rongen to study the matter and report to deputies. Rev van Rongen noted that articles 46, 59 and 60 of the CO need attention. He suggests that synod makes separate statements about the application of these articles rather than amend them. He is also of the opinion that article 93 (Acts, 2000) virtually changed synod decision in article 67 (Acts 1985) by rewording it.

In view of the decision by the synod of the RCNZ not to accept fraternal relations, deputies did not evaluate the report further.

3. Conclusions

3.1 *Fraternal Relations*

After assessing the responses from the churches and the reaction from the RCNZ deputies propose not to proceed with the decision of article 93 of Synod West Albany 2000 to offer to establish fraternal relations.

There continues to be general agreement in the responses received from the churches that the RCNZ relationship with the CRCA is a stumbling block, although some churches are prepared to establish sister relations despite this impediment. However deputies are of the opinion this would be contrary to previous synods Launceston 1985 (article 75), Armadale 1990 (article 53), Kelmscott 1996 (article 53) and Launceston 1998 (article 89).

Therefore deputies recommend to wait for the RCNZ to deal with their erring sister, and continue to encourage the RCNZ to strongly admonish the CRCA and to be consequential with them if they do not heed the admonitions.

3.2 *Recognition*

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Synod Kelmscott 1996, article 53 (grounds) noted *“that deputies have indicated that in doctrine, worship and church government the RCNZ must be considered a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ”*. The failure of Synod 1996 to explicitly recognize the RCNZ as true and faithful had been a great disappointment to the RCNZ. Their Synod, 1998 responded with a decision to *“express disappointment to the FRCA that they have not been able to recognise us officially as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ”* (See p105, FRCA Acts, 2000).

Synod West Albany, 2000 *“agreed in principle with the proposal of West Albany”*. Central to West Albany’s proposal was *“to recognise the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ”*. It is not within the rubric of deputies to comment whether one can ‘in principle’ recognise a church as true and faithful. It seems however, that when synod decided to adopt West Albany’s proposal ‘in principle’ it was referring to the offer of fraternal relations although this does implicitly assume such recognition.

The decisions of Synod West Albany 2000, along with the advice that these decisions were taken in principle, were passed on to the IRC RCNZ by deputies and also in the speech to Synod. Nevertheless, the RCNZ interpreted these decisions to mean that the FRCA had moved significantly forward from 1996 in recognising the RCNZ as “true and faithful”. Their Synod Christchurch, 2000 decided:

“To express thanks to the FRCA for their acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and for their proposal to establish a fraternal relationship with us”.

Whilst deputies now recommend not to proceed with the offer of fraternal relations, this does not mean that with this they also recommend the recognition of the RCNZ, which underpins the offer of fraternal relations, be withdrawn.

It is unethical to make such recognition, be it implicitly, and then somehow at the next synod to take it back again, especially since the reason is not new evidence, but rather the practical and church orderly implications and the RCNZ non-acceptance of the offer of fraternal relations. Ever since contact with the RCNZ was re-established in 1990, all Synod decisions regarding the RCNZ have referred only to the difficulties resulting from third party relationships. In recent decisions this has now only centred on the relationship with the CRCA.

While sister relations are not established, full unity of faith as experienced in fellowship at the Lord's Supper cannot be expressed. Nevertheless deputies recognise that there is a growing bond between the federations, although this is not formally defined in terms of fraternal or sister relations. This bond, which has developed over the years by increasing contact between the FRCA and the RCNZ and the appreciation for faithfulness found in the RCNZ, has been and will increasingly be manifest in practical outcomes. Over the years there have been visits by professors of the Canadian Reformed Theological College and also the principal of the Canadian Teacher's College, the late Br T. van der Ven.

4. Recommendations

Synod decide:

- 1) Not to proceed with the decision (in principle) to establish fraternal relations whilst maintaining the implicit recognition of the RCNZ as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) To decide that such a declaration is specific to the situation with the RCNZ for reasons mentioned by deputies in their report and therefore should not set a precedent and does not rescind or re-interpret the decision of Synod 1985, art 67.
- 3) To wait for the RCNZ to deal with their erring sister, and continue to encourage the RCNZ to strongly admonish the CRCA and to be consequential with them if they do not heed the admonitions.
- 4) To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a) To intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits if the synodical budget allows,
 - b) To invite the RCNZ to send 1 or 2 delegates to our next synod.
 - c) To authorise two delegates to visit the next synod of the RCNZ.
 - d) To keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature or visits.

Appendix 4c - Visit to the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (27th April to 3 May 2002)

After an overnight flight from Perth via Sydney, we arrived in Christchurch on Friday afternoon to be greeted by our hosts, Mr and Mrs Fietje. They first showed us a little of the city of Christchurch before we arrived safely at what would be our comfortable home for the next 10 days. Christchurch is a city of over 300,000 people and the largest in the south island of New Zealand.

The synod was opened on Saturday afternoon by the acting moderator, Rev. M. Flinn. Some early housekeeping matters, common to all synods, namely checking of credentials, voting for moderamen and delegates signifying their agreement with the doctrinal standards of the RCNZ were completed on Saturday afternoon before the Synod was adjourned. The moderator for this synod was Rev. W. Wiersma from Hamilton and the first clerk Rev. B. Hoyt. A prayer service, led by Rev. M. Flinn, was held Saturday evening, similar to our synod prayer service. The text was Psalm 133 "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity". This proved to be a recurring theme in devotions and prayers throughout the synod.

We visited the church service in Christchurch on Sunday morning, one of four services we attended during our stay. In each case the preaching was sound and the order of worship, although a little different to ours, still made us 'feel at home'. In the church of Christchurch, some young people provided musical accompaniment to the organ for singing before and during the service. It appears in this and other matters there is some variety in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. The singing was from the 'blue' psalter hymnal of the Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA). This psalter hymnal contains a large number of psalms, some with Genevan tunes. It is out of print and the CRCNA replacement, which includes psalms that have been written in gender neutral form, is unacceptable to most, although not all, in the RCNZ. The problem of obtaining a suitable songbook was on the agenda of the previous synod and also this synod dealt with it. The conclusion was to aim for their own hymnbook, although interest was shown in the reported new combined Book of Praise for the Canadian Reformed Churches when the proposed merger with the URC is implemented.

Delegates

Synod commenced on Monday with reportedly 58 delegates attending at some time during synod. This includes alternates and visiting delegates. In the RCNZ, all churches have two delegates and some churches sent alternate delegates who seemed to have the same privilege to speak, although not vote. Some of these delegates were ministers who were working in home mission situations. There were nine overseas delegates. Besides ourselves, there were two delegates from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia and two from the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. Three separate Churches in South

Africa sent delegates, although only one of these, the GKSA, is a sister church of the NZ churches. A Korean-speaking congregation from Auckland, called the Independent Reformed Church of Auckland (Korean) also sent a delegate, Rev. J. Cho. He noted his church was the only Korean church which had Reformed as its name.

With so many delegates having speaking privileges and thirty-six delegates with voting rights, it was remarkable that the Synod could complete what seemed a full agenda within a week. As pointed out by the visitors to the previous synod, the secret lay in the NZ practice of sessions (consistories) discussing and forming a point of view on each agenda item. This meant delegates were well prepared. It was stressed already in the previous report, and we saw that this time too, those delegates did have the freedom to vote differently if they were so persuaded.

RTC Geelong and CRCA

A major issue on the agenda was the RCNZ relationship with the Reformed Theological College (RTC) in Geelong and with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). In regard to the College, NZ deputies had proposed to synod to give notice that the New Zealand Churches would be no longer bound to the contract the terms of which makes provisions regarding the RCNZ sending students to the college for training.

Difficulties had arisen with two professors, one of whom had been involved in the “Word and Spirit” report. They provided a written explanation of their position which included the view that *“the Scripture does not exclude the possibility of God communicating information to his people in an extraordinary way, i.e. by means not limited to the illumination of Scripture and general revelation, including understanding God’s providential dealings.”* It was considered this was not in keeping with the Confessional forms of the Church (especially the Westminster Confession of Faith).

In view of further differences of viewpoint and practice between the CRCA and the RCNZ, it was felt that other matters of doctrinal difference would likely arise leading to more tension. Thus, the current contract, which involves confessional subscription, will be dissolved, and the deputies will explore the possibility of a new arrangement. The level of funding support will also be reviewed at the next synod. Although synod still continued to commend the RTC at Geelong “as a suitable college for our students”, one could not help but form the opinion that a first, significant step has been taken. This view was supported by the separate discussion on proposals for the New Zealand churches to establish their own college although Synod decided such a proposal was impractical at this stage. Synod also decided to recognize theological education by correspondence as a legitimate option for some students. A number of students will take this option, supplemented by practical studies at RTC.

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Regarding the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the previous RCNZ synod had lifted all restrictions on the relations with the CRCA, which had been imposed due to concerns regarding Word and Spirit, Women in Office and innovative worship practices. This synod heard that the 2000 CRCA synod opened the way for the ordination of women as deacons, although they will not be part of session. Younger children (the pastoral guidelines say no younger than 10 years of age), who have a mature understanding of the confessions and demonstrate faith and love for the Lord, may profess their faith within the CRCA with a modified version of the existing form and then be allowed to attend the Lord's Supper.

The Interchurch Relations Committee in its report noted that these decisions were in conflict with Belgic Confession Articles 30 and 35 respectively. Synod decided to advise the CRCA *"because of decisions on women as deacons, children at the Lord's Supper and, continued acceptance of worship practices which are a departure from traditional Reformed practices"*, the sister relationship with the CRCA is *"again under strain."* A proposal to go further than this and suspend the relationship received some support but was defeated.

The RCNZ are heavily involved in the ICRC and their interchurch relations are driven by contacts and cooperation made through the ICRC. It was decided to accept a sister relationship with the GKN (Lib), if as expected, it was offered by Synod Zuidhorn. A sister relationship was also established with the PCEA; earlier synods had not been convinced of the value in such a relationship. Furthermore, moves towards sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) were also agreed to.

Relations with FRCA

After Rev. Veldman was allowed to address synod, the proposal agreed in principle by synod Albany to offer fraternal relations was discussed. The NZ Interchurch Relations Committee had looked at the suggested rules for fraternal relations and compared them with the rules for sister relations in the NZRC. There was found to be little difference between the two sets of rules and therefore there was no impediment from the position of the RCNZ to offering sister relations to the FRCA. We made it clear, that although the RCNZ may call the relationship sister relations, from our side there were some important differences between the offered fraternal relations and our rules for sister relations. Amongst these differences was the exclusion of the possibility of opening the pulpit to RCNZ ministers. Synod, after considerable discussion, came to the conclusion that the offered fraternal relations did indeed fall short of was the accepted understanding of sister relations, although the rules may have been similar. Synod therefore decided to reaffirm its desire to enter into a sister relationship with the FRCA at what ever time the FRCA was ready to reciprocate. The full text of the decision was:

1. *To express thanks to the FRCA for their acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and for their proposal to establish a fraternal relationship with us.*
2. *To reaffirm its desire to offer the FRCA a sister-church relationship*
3. *To send a delegate to the next FRCA synod in order to convey this in person.*

Mission

Other matters of interest at Synod were the proposal from the Overseas Mission Board to commence mission activity in Port Moresby. A presentation was given by two delegates who had visited PNG and spoke at length to Rev. S. 'tHart who is working in Ekora under the auspices of the Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto. The history of the FRCA involvement in mission work in PNG was given attention and Rev. Veldman was asked for advice on a number of matters. Synod decided to allocate \$NZ50,000 per year to the project. It will mean close cooperation with the Canadian Reformed Church at Toronto and also contact with the Free Reformed Church of Armadale.

As mentioned, despite the weighty agenda, Synod was able to conclude on Friday evening and your delegates were able to enjoy the surroundings of Christchurch on a beautifully warm day on Saturday. On Sunday we again listened to the Word of God preached in the other two Christchurch congregations (Bishopdale and Dovedale).

Conclusion

To see the actual decisions of Synod, the RCNZ web page <http://www.reformed-churches.org.nz> has all the decisions and the reports. The undersigned delegates are positive about the outcome of this synod as regards future relations between the RCNZ and the FRCA, although the proposal for fraternal relations was not accepted. As the RCNZ moves closer to our sisters in the Netherlands and Canada and other churches in the ICRC, the impression is gained that it is moving away from the CRCA which maintains its ties with the REC and continues relations with churches which have no ties with the RCNZ. The CRCA's continued relations with unfaithful churches such as the CRCNA and others within the REC, will see it import unreformed practices, such as is already evident in the decisions on women in office and children at the Lord's Supper table. The New Zealand churches will continue to admonish their cross-Tasman sister, as is their task, but as was pointed out in Rev. Veldman's address, admonitions, if not heeded, must have consequences.

Synod also gave time for your delegates to absorb many personal perceptions and insights about the RCNZ from discussions on the floor of synod and from discussions outside of synod. One overwhelming impression was, as mentioned previously, the greater diversity within this bond of churches than can be found within the FRCA. A study of the history of the RCNZ, which shows that it has received members from a diverse background of churches within the Netherlands, from within New Zealand and now also from South Africa gives

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insight into this. However, that observation does not detract from the comments made in various previous deputies reports, and now confirmed again by this visit, that the RCNZ is a church that seeks to remain faithful to the King of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

L van Burgel
A. Veldman

Appendix 4d - Address to RCNZ Synod 2002 by Rev. A. Veldman

Mr. Chairman, Members of Synod, Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is for the third time within 10 years that a delegation of the FRCA visits your synod. Sending these delegations, as FRCA we want to show that we truly value the contact we have with the RCNZ, a contact that throughout these ten years surely has become more meaningful. We believe that via your delegations to our synods (four times in ten years) and our delegations to your synods there has grown a better mutual understanding of each other's positions. At times we might do things differently, there might be a different approach to certain issues, nevertheless together we want to contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.¹ Thus true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ binds us together. That's why we are here, since we share so much in common. Standing together on the common basis of the Reformed faith, at this synod we hope to find a listening ear, and if possible also a better understanding of the position of the FRCA with respect to its relationship with the RCNZ. In moving forward in this relationship at times we may go somewhat slower than perhaps you would expect us to do. However, don't think because of this that we are less sincere in our desire to grow closer together.

Decision Synod Albany 2000

Our last General Synod in July 2000 dealt with a proposal, put forward by one of the local churches, to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ. Synod decided to agree to this proposal in principle. You may have some questions here. Why no sister-church-relationship and why agreement to this proposal only 'in principle'? From your point of view we can understand these questions. Yet here comes in what I said before, "We might do things in a different way, yet do not interpret this as if we are less sincere."

In order to gain some understanding and hopefully also some appreciation, why we took this decision and also why we agreed to it only 'in principle', I would like to give you some background information.

The local church that put this proposal on the table of Synod wanted the FRCA to move forward in its contacts with the RCNZ. Perhaps together with others they had grown somewhat impatient, wondering why moving forward had to take so long.

In its covering letter this church wroteⁱⁱ,

"Our relationship with the RCNZ is not a new relationship. We have had contact with these churches already for over 15 years. In that

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period we have come to know one another reasonably well. Deputies have had contact, we have exchanged delegates at one another's synods, and members of our churches have visited back and forth.

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand have shown themselves to be true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our major assemblies have never expressed doubts about the RCNZ's faithfulness in administering the Word, Sacraments, and Church Discipline. We have seen that the RCNZ is consequent and principled in their approach to inter-church relations. They are not afraid to speak out if they see error and will draw the conclusions as required. They broke off relations with the GKN (Synodical) many years ago and also withdrew from the REC. At their last Synod – this refers to your synod held in 1998 – they broke off ties completely with the Christian Reformed Church of North America. They have also ceased contact with NGK (Buiten-Verband) and will intensify relations with the GKN (Liberated).

The RCNZ have also taken a principled approach in their relationship with the Reformed Church of Australia (RCA) ...For us it is this relationship between the RCNZ and the RCA that has remained as a stumbling block for us to enter into a sister church relationship with the RCNZ.

So far this covering letter, from which it becomes clear the main obstacle left in moving forward in our relationship is your relationship with the CRCA.

Rev. VanDelden, representing the FRCA at your previous synod, in his address explained to you why we have difficulty with this relationship. It is because of a triangular problem. Rev. Flinn in his abridged report on the FRCA synod (Appendix 5) speaks about the practical implications of this triangular problem. He writes, if the FRCA would enter into a full sister-church relationship with the RCNZ, then there is a possibility, in principle, of one of our ministers preaching in a FRCA congregation and then in a CRCA one, which would cause our churches great pastoral difficulty.

The question now is, whether because of this stumbling block there is no way whatsoever to move forward in having closer ties with one another. The local church that addressed our synod wrote in its covering letter,

"We recognize that this relationship –the relationship between the RCNZ and CRCA – is an impediment that stands in the way of a full sister church relationship. But we doubt whether it prevents us from having any kind of relationship with the RCNZ. Our system of having only two kinds of relationship (corresponding relationship and sister church relationship) is what gets in the way of pursuing and developing ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCNZ. The RCNZ are disappointed in the fact that we cannot recognize them as true and faithful churches. We also get frustrated in trying to develop this relationship in a meaningful way.

For this reason – so the covering letter carries on – we propose a new kind of relationship between our churches. We call it fraternal

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relations. This relationship is based on two fundamental principles. First, that we recognize a church as being a true and faithful church according to Articles 27-32 of the Belgic Confession. And second, that some practical or historical impediments stand in the way of entering a full sister church relationship."

What is this fraternal relationship, what are the rules and in what way does this relationship differ from a sister church relationship?

The fraternal relationship with the RCNZ would be according to the following rules:

- a. Fraternal relations shall be used to promote ecclesiastical fellowship with churches with which we do not yet have sister church relations;
- b. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts of their Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to their respective churches;
- c. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties;
- d. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations;
- e. The churches shall give account to each other concerning substantial changes or additions to the confessions, church order, or liturgical forms;
- f. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as fraternal delegates.

Comparing these rules with the rules the FRCA has for sister-church relationships, there are some significant differences. Excluded from the rules for fraternal relations are rules, which includes the sisterly duty to mutually 'care for each other' as well as the rule, which opens the pulpit to a minister from a sister church and allows the calling of a minister from a sister church.

Again you may wonder are these differences so important? They are to us. Yet at the same time, please, brothers, accept that this has nothing to do with a diminishing desire from our side to move forward in growing closer together. Yet the point is we want to do this in a sincere way, signalling that as yet not all problems have been removed.

A delegate at one of our synods once used the following metaphor. When you want to date or court a girl, first you do a lot of 'window-shopping'. You don't want to enter into a relationship just with any girl. Once you become more sincere, you start courting a particular girl to get to know each other better. When you think you know each other well enough you start making plans for marriage. But often there still is a step in between: engagement!

I would like to compare our offer of fraternal relationship with this step in between, highlighting our sincerity in this offer. As far as the metaphor is

concerned, engagement means you are completely sure you want to marry this particular girl. But at the same time you also say the time for marriage has not yet come. Perhaps there are still certain matters that need attention. I hope you get the drift of this metaphor, even though perhaps in this situation it cannot be applied for the full 100%.

Finally why did Synod agree to this proposal only 'in principle'? The reason for this is: though there was much appreciation for this proposal, there was also some apprehension, since some members of synod thought that in accepting this proposal the matter of a third-party relationship was no longer receiving due attention. Also, in preparation for synod this proposal had not received sufficient attention by the local churches. That's why synod agreed to the proposal in principle. This means we will wait with implementation of this decision till our next synod, which is scheduled for July 2003.

Implementation is depending on:

1. Your response to this decision;
2. Response from the local churches from within our own bond of churches.

Recommendations of the RCNZ's Deputies for Interchurch Relations

Your Deputies for Interchurch Relations in their report to this synod recognize the decision taken by our synod 'as a significant step forward.' They write, *"We have compared their proposed rules for this relationship with our own rules for sister-churches and there is no essential difference in wording however."*

This is indeed true as far as the RCNZ is concerned. Yet as regards the FRCA there is a difference, as I have pointed out already. Therefore we would plead with your synod, at present not yet to establish a sister church relationship, but instead to reciprocate the offer and wait with implementing this relationship till we are mutually ready for it. Also when it comes to implementation we may call fraternal, what you may call a sister church relationship. Again, we plead for patience with and understanding for our position in this respect.

Relations with the CRCA

In this address I would like include some comments about your relations with the CRCA. Over the years we have expressed our appreciation for your principled approach in this relation. Your 1995 synod placed restrictions on this relationship because of the – then still – RCA's stand on Word and Spirit, Women in office, and Worship practises. In 1998 you withdrew these restrictions somewhat, since it seemed that there was a heeding of your appeal. That same synod also asked your IRC to encourage us to work diligently to remove obstacles, which separate us from the CRCA. This is understandable since the aforementioned problems we have in the triangular relationship between the FRCA, RCNZ, and CRCA can be resolved in more than one way.

The FRCA deputies have met with the CRCA deputies six times in order to discuss with them the contents of an appeal which we prepared for their synod. This appeal concerned the matters regarding women in office, worship practices and 'word and spirit'. We are standing here together with you at one front, that's why we sent you a copy of this appeal. In this respect we can indeed be a hand and a foot to each other, sharing information, and helping each other in studying the issues concerned. I think here also about concerns regarding proposed modifications to the Church Order and the admission to the Lord's Table of children at a young age.

Brothers, we indeed hope that we may fight this battle together, whereby there should also be firmness. With this firmness we mean – what Rev. vanDelden already said in his address to Synod 1998 – that at the appropriate time you will also accept the consequences, in the event appeals are not heeded.

We understand that the ties you have with the CRCA will not be easily broken, but at the same time appeals make only sense when in the end we will also enforce the consequences.

Concluding remarks

Mr. Chairman, there is perhaps more that I could say, yet let me conclude. If there is still misunderstanding or unclearness about certain things I have said, we are quite willing to give further explanation with respect to the decisions taken by our last synod, be it during the discussions of the recommendations of your Interchurch Relations C'tee or in a more informal way during intervals and mealtimes.

Finally, Br. Moderator, I thank you for the opportunity and privilege to address this assembly and also for the invitation to spend time with you during this synod. We appreciate the ecclesiastical fellowship we experience in this. We also want to thank you for the warm hospitality we receive here.

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia I pass on our warmest greetings. I do this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Church. May He bless you as churches both on the local scene and also in your work here in this assembly.

I thank you.

ⁱ Jude vs. 3

ⁱⁱⁱ Letter of FRC West Albany, dated June 2000

Appendix 5 - . Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches (Indonesia/Philippines)

Having been appointed by Synod 2000, deputies thus far met fourteen times. All the meetings took place in a brotherly atmosphere. Being appointed by synod, Rev. P.K.A. de Boer was convener; br. J. Van Dijk continued as treasurer; br. W. Vander Jagt was appointed as clerk. At its April 24, 2001 meeting deputies received a request from br. J. Van Dijk to be relieved of his duties for health reasons. This request was granted and a letter of gratitude for work done has been sent. Br. J. Bosveld was appointed to take his place as treasurer. Br. S.H. Terpstra, the alternate appointed by synod was approached and he joined in with deputy's work. At our November 22, 2001 meeting a letter was received from br. S.H. Terpstra informing us that he wishes to resign as deputy for he did not think this is the kind of work he likes doing. A letter was sent acquiescing to his request with a reminder that his appointment was ecclesiastical. Seeing that Synod had appointed no other alternative and the present deputies were able to handle the workload, no replacement was found.

Our mandate included two main areas of work; namely Indonesia and the Philippines. Synod 2000 also instructed us to adopt the *Guidelines for Support* and keep refining them. Seeing that financial support has been given, we divide this report into three main sections; namely concerning: 1) the Churches of Indonesia, 2) the Churches of the Philippines, 3) the Guidelines, 4) the Finances.

Part One The Churches of Indonesia

Our mandate concerning these churches as decided by Synod 2000 is as follows:

Article 46

Indonesian Churches (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia)

Material: Agenda item 12.4.2.4 Deputies Report

Decisions:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the Synods of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;

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4. To support financially Pila Njuka and his family to allow Pila Njuka to study at Hamilton and to monitor his progress;
5. To adopt the Guidelines for Support and to ask deputies to keep refining these guidelines;*
6. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 3 and 4 above;
7. To confirm the decision of deputies to pay from the synodical treasury the travel costs of Reverend Mahda Bilia.; and
8. To send delegates to the next Conference of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

Grounds:

- i. The Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
- ii. The churches are in a position to support these sister churches in training future leaders and building up the congregations. For this reason, visits to the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia are in place also.
- iii. Synod 1998 decided to support financially Pila Njuka and his family to enable him to study at Hamilton. This commitment should continue, subject to satisfactory progress.
- iv. Previous deputies reports had mentioned problems relating to providing support and guidelines will be beneficial.
- v. Since the Conference of Reformed Churches in Indonesia will discuss important matters, including theological training which concerns us, it is good to send delegates.

ADOPTED

Article 49

Gereja Greja Musyarir Reformasi (GMMR)

Materials: Agenda Item 12.4.2.4

Deputies Report

Decisions:

1. To continue to visit the synods of the GGMR subject to finance;
2. To support the GGMR in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
3. To monitor and report developments in the GGNIR;

* Please note that we deal with this matter in a separate section of our report since it pertains to all the churches we have relations with.

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4. To provide limited support for Rev Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him;
5. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2 and 4 above.

Grounds:

- i. The churches are in a position to help the GGNIR develop in a reformed manner and building up the congregations. For this reason, visits to the Gereja-Gereja Musyafir Reformasi are in place also.
- ii. The GGNIR needs to be stabilised before recommendations regarding sister church relationships can be considered.
- iii. Rev Yonson Dethan has in the past been supported by the FRCA for theological training and it is appropriate to continue the support in a limited but meaningful manner.

Contact with churches in Indonesia [GGRI and the GGMR [now GGRC]

We are thankful to report that our contacts with the Indonesian churches have been very good. Two delegates [Br. J. Bosveld and Rev. W. van der Jagt] could visit the *Conference of the Indonesian churches in Sentani* [Papua]. Br J. Bosveld also visited the synod of the GGRM and was asked to deliver papers at some seminars. In order to get their name registered by the civil government the synod the GGRM was forced to make a decision to change the name of the bond the churches. They changed the name into GGRCalvin.

Deputies received a request to possibly support br Yan Pariamalinya so that he can come to Australia to study the English language. The Indonesian deputies have been contacted about this matter but have not yet received a response. If they come with positive advice, re the study of br. Yan Pariamalinya, deputies will grant their request, subject to the permission of synod.

There has been continued debate about theological training in Indonesia and some recent developments. The theological school in Waingapu has not been functioning very well. Both Rev. Th. Oosterhuis and Rev. H, Bos who used to lecture there have returned to the Netherlands. For some time the Dutch sister churches support a man of the Presbyterian Church of Java to teach here, but not all the Indonesian churches were happy about this arrangement. Because of its location, there are no electrical or communications infrastructure in place, it was thought that it might be a good idea to close this school. An additional reason to close it was the churches investigation into establishing a school for higher theological training in Kupang. All the parties involved agree that Kupang is a better place for the theological training [better facilities as electricity, phone etc.)

According to the information we received the Dutch churches are willing to financially support this project. Although it was officially decided to go ahead with this theological school in Kupang, it has not yet been established. In the mean time, in Waingapu, the theological school closed down for after the passing away of Rev. Rajah, Rev. Doko remained the only lecturer. The plan was for Rev. Doko to move to Kupang and become one of the lecturers at that proposed school. This has not yet happened, partly because Rev. Doko insists that a school must be established before lectures can start. There appear to be more reason, but we are not sure of them. More recently Rev. Doko started to lecture in Waingapu again because, he argued, something is better than nothing.

Deputies decide to support the request of the deputies of the GGRI-NTT for the Bulletin of the GGRI-NTT under the condition that they have to appoint a treasurer who is accountable for the financial aspect. Our treasurer will pay the amount necessary for the next Bulletin after receipt of the previous one. After a trial period of several issue's an evaluation is necessary re the reception of the Bulletin. At the moment deputies received two bulletins. The reception of the Bulletins in the Indonesian churches is very positive.

One of our deputies, br J. Bosveld visited as our delegate the synod of the GGRM [=GGRC]. In a letter dated 10.08.02 the GGRC expressed her thanks re sending br. J. Bosveld as delegate to their synod. The synod of the GGRC asked the FRCA to support Rev. Yawan Bunda for a period of 3 months in order to study in Australia [Greek, Hebrew, English and general Theol. Knowledge]. They gave the following reasons: Rev. Yawan Bunda is still young and can be prepared for the theological training in the GGRC/GGRI; he has a good basic knowledge; He could be very useful for the future upbuilding of the Indonesian churches.

Deputies decided to respond positively to this request subject to a positive response of the Dutch sister-churches [in the past they promised to support two students for the English course, but only Madah Biha came], [the FRCA would support them for the travel costs] and the approval of our synod.

Sister church relationship with the GGRM [=GGRC]

At the moment we do not have a sister church relationship with the GGRM for the following reasons: a] we already have a sister church relationship with the GGRI; b] they have accepted the practice of women in the office of deacon. Deputies have discussed this point with several ministers/delegates of the GGRM on a personal capacity. They state that it is not correct to say that the GGRM accepted women in the office of deacon. There is one local church [the Galilea church] that has [forced by the circumstances] accepted women in the office of deacon. They see this more as a remnant of the past history of that local church.

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Our deputies are not sure whether there is any progress in the desired unity of the GGRI with the GGRM and it is unclear just how much effort these churches are making to become one. On the one hand there is quite some working together and helping one another. Although the GGRI continue to consider the fact that the GGRM still have women in the office of deacon an obstacle, they have no problem fully recognizing them as sister churches. They understand that the GGRC, in principle, does not support the idea of women in office. It should also be kept in mind that most the GGRI churches are on the Island of Sumba while the GGRC are concentrated on Timor. There appears to be other practical obstacles including differing social backgrounds and status, economic inability to communicate, different levels of education and not having neither the opportunity nor means to study the necessity for unity and so forth. It would be beneficial if the next deputies received the mandate to investigate how these churches can be helped to come to unity.

Support br Pila Njuka and his family

On a regular basis deputies had contact with br Pila Njuka and the Theological College in Hamilton regarding the study and support of br Pila Njuka. In the year 2000 br Pila Njuka passed his TOEFL test [English language] and received his certificate of Redeemer College, requirements before he could be admitted to the Theological College in Hamilton. Upon reaching the requirements, Hamilton could accept him as a student for the Master of Divinity Program. Since his admission we received positive report from the Senate of the Theological College in Hamilton re the study progress of br Pila Njuka. During his stay in Canada one of our deputies could have some contact with the Theological College Hamilton and received positive information about br Pila Njuka's study progress. At the moment br Pila Njuka is busy with his last year of the study and deputies have to prepare his [and his family's] return to Indonesia. It is the intention of the deputies to invite him to Australia on his way back so that he can familiarise himself with the Australian churches and can inform the membership about his studies and the Indonesian churches. After having support this brother to complete these studies, it is also important to see to it that he is properly received in Indonesia so that his studies may benefit those churches.

Support Rev. Madah Biha

Together with the deputies of our Dutch sister churches the Australian churches made it possible for Rev. Madah Biha to study in Australia [esp language studies]. From the Phoenix English Language Academy we received positive reports about his progress. He received his certificate that he had followed the course. Rev. Madah Biha was also willing to address the members of the Australian Churches about the actual situation in the GGRI. This happened in a meeting organised by Mission Aid Australia.

After his return it became clear that his studies in the English language was very beneficial for maintaining a good contact with the GGRI. Rev. Madah Biha is involved in several deputyships and committees so that it is easier to

communicate with the GGRI. He is also able to read the Australian church magazines. He expressed, for instance, his thankfulness for articles in *Una Sancta* re the Islam and asked permission to translate them to be published in their Bulletin.

During his stay in the midst of the Australian churches deputies discussed with Rev. Madah Biha the actual situation in the Indonesian churches, esp the situation re the theological training of the future ministers of the GGRI. He expressed some concern about the direction the Dutch sister-churches take in their approach of the theological training and their support of a non-denominational and unconfessional College in Djakarta [SETIA].

Yonson Dethan

According to our instruction we have supported Rev. Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him. Deputies have encouraged him to talk about this with his own consistory so that his consistory will take a part of this responsibility. We did not receive an answer yet but will monitor these developments. If this would be the case deputies are of the opinion that it is advisable to use that money to support Rev. Madah Biha in the same way to ensure that there is an effective communication.

Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [lib] re the GGRI

During his stay in Western Australia Rev. H. Bos [missionary in Indonesia of behalf of the Dutch sister churches] was willing to inform the deputies about the actual situation in the Indonesian churches. Major points of discussion were the theological training in Indonesia and the position of women in the churches.

At the moment the Dutch churches do not have a certain position re the theological training. They are waiting for the decisions of the Indonesian churches, although they will be careful re a theological college in Kupang. The training school at Boma has been closed for the theological training of future ministers/evangelists. They are organising courses especially for the evangelists in the kampongs.

In Jakarta are two options: a) STTRII, this is the very high level Chinese school of Dr Stephan Tong. The level seems to be too high; b) SETIA, meant for people from the regions on a lower level. They have asked for help from the Dutch churches in order to strengthen the Reformed identity. The Dutch churches have been giving support by sending lecturers. The support and recommendation for this school is an experiment. The training in Waimaru and in Kalimantan Barat is followed by 18 and 2 or 3 students respectively.

Two of the deputies [Rev. DeBoer and Rev. van der Jagt] could arrange a meeting with the Dutch deputies to discuss the situation [esp re the theological training] in the GGRI. Concerning theological training, the Dutch churches [esp the 'Groninger' deputies] have received a request for help in a theological

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training centre in Jakarta [SETIA]. This is viewed as a mission project and the hope is that by helping and sending lecturers this college may grow in a more real reformed direction. At the moment ds. H. Venema is sent by the 'Groninger' deputies to teach there. He will retire this year [2003]. Replacement has been found. It was also thought that somehow this work could be combined with theological training for the Indonesian churches. All this is still in very preliminary stages and the Dutch themselves are not sure how to proceed in this whole matter. For now this project is not to be confused with the Indonesian sister-church relations.

The Dutch deputies are of the opinion that it would be best to have the theological training as close to home as possible. Right now the Dutch do not think that school at Wyamarang [Sumba] is functioning very well. The discussion then turned to the advantages and disadvantages of establishing such training in Kupang. The problem includes that a general theological training center that includes the Churches in Irian Jaya would not work. The problem is that the cultural and economic differences are too great. Concern is also expressed for the majority GGRI-congregations. They are in Sumba. To them it may appear that a College in Kupang becomes too much the college of the GGRC. Moreover, the fact that the college can benefit the churches in more ways than one, professors and lecturers near by can be a great access to local churches. Seeing that the majority of churches are in Sumba maybe the college should be there. If the GGRI would ask, the Dutch churches are prepared to give personnel support [it's not necessary that this has to be a teacher]. The Dutch churches try to stimulate the integration of the GGRI and GGRC. There is also a spiritual need in the local churches. For this reason 'executive training' at a local level is necessary. It is necessary to give some guidance re the board of the theological schools. An ecclesiastical community worker is necessary.

Conference of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia

In their report to Synod West Albany 2000 deputies wrote that a 'conference should have taken place in July/99 in Boma, Irian Jaya. Owing to difficulties at that place, the conference was not organised.' After some time the conference was held from 23rd October 2000 till 27th October 2000 in Sentani [Irian Jaya / Papua]. The deputies appointed Rev. W. van der Jagt and br J. Bosveld to attend the conference.

Delegates were present from the GGRI Papua, GGRI Kal Bar; GGRINTT, LITINDO, FRCA, BBK. On behalf of the FRCAustralia the delegates have addressed the conference and passed on our Christian greetings and feelings of love for the brotherhood in Indonesia.

The main topic of the conference was the future of the Theological Training in the GGRI. The existing Theological colleges [Boma [Papua], Wai-Marangu [Sumba] and Kalimantan Barat] have at the moment apparently three levels. Some students who have the capabilities and wish to study further have to attend another college of other denominations. The desire is to build a college

which extends beyond level three. The delegates of Kupang came with a plan to extend the college beyond level three [University level] and also to have this built centrally. The church in Kupang has already taken some initiative. The delegates of the other regions will take this proposal to their own churches and will ask for their opinion. The plan is then that 1] the GGRI areas choose the people who will be in the college committee [BPPTTR]; 2] the GGRI give out information about the college system of model of the college; 3] the GGRI give members invitation to the seminar of the BPPTTR in December 2000.

At the moment there is no other option but to send the students to colleges of other denominations. The several regions are too divers to come with a common approach. It is not ideal to send students to a college of another denomination or an interdenominational one. The students are not taught in the Reformed doctrine. But the churches are forced to do so because they do not yet have their own college. Therefore it is a] important to know the direction of the theological schools; b] important to closely monitor the students sent there; and c] necessary that the GGRI have to look into opening communication with other churches [for example GKS SETIA].

The conference also discussed the publication of a revised Church Book, a GGRI National Synod, evangelism, ICRC, the position of women in the church, the administration of the sacraments and the publication of a GGRI National Church Bulletin. No conclusions were drawn or decisions made

During the conference Rev. H. G. Gunnink gave some explanation of the LITINDO project in the Netherlands. LITINDO stands for Literature Theologia Indonesia. Via this project our Dutch sister churches try to translate important reformed literature into Bahasa Indonesia.

On the basis of this report the deputies draw the conclusion in their meeting of 26th April 2001 that it is very important to have personal contact with the Indonesian churches and that it is really beneficial to send delegates to the conferences/synods of the GGRI. Re the Theological training it was the conclusion of deputies that the Australian churches have to closely monitor the developments re the theological training and to investigate in close contact with our Dutch sister-churches whether it is possible to be actively involved in the theological training by organising lecturers etc. It is important to realise that, although this can't be done in the actual situation of the Indonesian churches, the theological training for the ministry is an important task of the churches in Indonesia. The Australian churches have to further investigate whether it is necessary and possible to support individual student[s] for their language study and/or theological training.

Personal letter from Dr. C. Van Dam of Theological College at Hamilton:

On personal basis Dr. C. Van Dam asks: *whether Australia is planning to continue funding Indonesian students in one form or another. We have started*

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a Foreign Student Bursary Fund and we would certainly look to supporting Indonesian students if necessary. However, we would not be able to support them during the time they need to qualify for their TOEFL entry requirements etc. Would Australia continue to be interested in doing that? Would you know what Australia's position at the moment? Pila hinted that more students could come here if funding was available. Deputies can agree with Dr. Van Dam that it may still be advisable to send Indonesian students overseas for study. If so, we can consider to apply for the foreign student bursary fund.

Recommendations regarding the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia and the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin:

1. To continue the sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue contacts with the GGRC.
3. To appoint deputies and give the following mandate:
 - a. To continue to visit the conference/synods of the GGRI and the GGRC subject to available finance;
 - b. To support the GGRI and GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available.
 - c. To financially support br. Pila Njuka (along with his family) to complete his studies at Hamilton, monitor his progress, and prepare for his return to Indonesia. To invite him to Australia on his way back to Indonesia and to monitor, and where necessary, support, his reintegration into Indonesia and among the churches.
 - d. To monitor and determine the best possibilities to train Indonesian theological students – by either supporting and helping in setting up a college for theological training (for eg., in Kupang) or sending another student overseas to study.
 - e. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which the already recognise.
 - f. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
 - g. To financially support Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC and in a different year Rev. Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study English for three months in Australia. In the case of Yan Pariamalinya this is subject to an expected request from the GGRI deputies. Both request are subject to a financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject of available funding from the churches.
 - h. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 4, 7, and 8 above.

Grounds:

- i. The GGRI continues to show faithfulness to the Lord as He teaches in His Word and has been upheld by the Reformed Confessions.
- ii. Seeing that the GGRI and GGRC are sister churches, relations with the one makes contact with the other mandatory.

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- Moreover, these churches have show faithfulness to God's Word and the Reformed confessions in many ways.
- iii. Deputies need to be appointed to maintain the sister church and contact relations:
- a. Visiting the conferences and synods have proven to be helpful especially to establish and maintain personal contacts.
 - b. These churches have very little means to build up and hold fast to the reformed faith. They have expressed a lot of gratitude for the support they do receive and were particularly thankful for the seminars, some of which were made possible through personal finances. When visiting conferences of synods such seminars could be organised and if there is a year without these assemblies, such seminars are a good means to keep contact with the office-bearers and members of these churches.
 - c. In his studies br. Njuka has shown ability to do this work and reports from Hamilton indicate that he will be able to complete it. The Churches of Austalia have supported this family and should therefore have the opportunity to see them now that the studies have been completed. Although it remains with the Indonesian Churches to receive this brother in their midst, by way of advice, deputies can help that this brother is directed in such a way that his studies may benefit the Indonesian churches.
 - d. Br. P. Njuka will DV complete his studies before next synod. The purpose of sending students to study overseas was to make it possible for the Indonesian Churches to eventually set up their own theological training. At this point, seeing that three trained men have then returned to Indonesian, brothers, Y. and E. Dethan and P. Njuka it may be enough to set up such a college. If it is not considered enough, it may be helpful/necessary to still send another student overseas.
 - e. The Lord calls His churches to be joined together. Such unity in Indonesia of the GGRI and the GGRC would also grant the FRCA the blessing of being fully united with all the churches that now meet in two different bonds.
 - f. Regular communication remains very important. These churches do not have the means to sustain them. Previous Synods agreed that a certain person be supported to keep communications possible. Deputies consider it better (without increasing the amount) to spread this support over more than one person.
 - g. To support Rev. Yawan Bunda in this way is on the request of the Indonesian Churches. The consistory of Rev. Yan Pariamalinya made this request and deputies directed

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them to make their request via their deputies. At one time the Dutch sister churches agreed to pay for the cost of training two students in Australia for a three month period if the Australian Churches pay the costs of travel and take care of accommodations. One such student has been here, namely Madah Biha. This proposal includes to ask the Dutch sister churches to support both these students on the same agreed basis. Deputies propose to support these students seeing that they are both very capable, both have some knowledge of English and improve knowledge is very helpful to study from reformed literature.

- h. Past synods have agreed that to support these churches, deputies encourage the churches to contribute to this important work.

Appendix 5a - Report on visit to Indonesia from 8-7-2000 to 21-7-2000 by J Bosveld

Arriving in Bali, I was met by Pdt. Dethan who just came back from Jakarta. We spent one day together in Kuta, before we were able to take the flight to Kupang. While we were there we talked about his experience in Jakarta. His concern was that the Dutch churches invited all sorts of persons who still have the reformed back ground, but he found a lot of liberal ideas among them and he didn't quite know the full purpose of the week's seminar. The first week I spent in Kupang with most of the time taken up by the three days seminar, attended by about 80 to 90 people. There was good participation both in listening and discussion.

The first day I delivered the paper to the youth entitled "God's Stewards". This was a follow up of last year on the paper "You are God's Fellow Workers". The second day I delivered a paper for the elders on "Elders as Office Bearers". This also was a follow up of last year paper on "Elders as Watchman on Zions Walls". The audience for the three days were practically the same. The last day there was another speaker in the morning, and the rest of the day we spent discussing the three day event and how to carry on. They would like these seminars more often, the main reason is that they have very little to read, and they found it very encouraging to have these meetings. My suggestion to them was, what about if they follow these topics up among themselves with say, another two or three meetings, and then next year we try to do the same. They had a lot of ear for that suggestion, and asked me if I could do a topic on the church, especially membership of the church. I told them that I would consider it, not so much the topic but me coming again.

After some very good fellowship and talks with these people for another couple of days, Madah Biha and I left for Sumba, where we stayed for three days at Pdt. Doko's place. This wasn't a five star hotel, we had to sleep together on a

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hard straw mattress and the nights were very humid, but the hospitality was very good. And I could spend a fair amount of time with Pdt. Doko to discuss the things of great concern; our main discussion was on how the Australian churches could be of assistance to them. The following points we should look at is,

- 1) The theological training
- 2) Support for their mission work
- 3) Support of projects rather than the financial help for support.

Seeing only the first item concerns us as deputies, I would like to say some thing about it. Rev. Doko expressed a great concern about the future of the theological school, and he is not on his own. The trend via Rev. Oosterhuis backed up by Holland gives him great concern. It seems to be going in a liberal way and the proof of it is that Holland is pushing for sending the students to Jakarta, where there are now two Dutch ministers working at a college which is interdenominational and organised by a board rather than by the church. Seeing they have now two ministers working there, there seems to be no problem sending the students to Jakarta. They just recently have appointed another teacher for the Wai-marangu theological school. He is from centre of Java, has a Presbyterian back ground but claims to be reformed. He taught the students, that God's Word in the bible only becomes true through the preaching, this gave great disturbance and unrest among the students, I already heard about it in Kupang from the students that were at the seminar. Also Pdt. Dethan was going to enquire about it. The students themselves asked for a special meeting between them and the lecturers, where they could speak openly about their concerns, for they felt that there was difference between the lecturers.

When they spoke about the difference of teachings and the different approaches, the new lecturer said that he only quoted what he read in a book about the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther. It was not what he taught but what he passed on from someone else.

Also according to Rev. Doko his approach to evangelising is not based on reformed principles and he will never mention whomever he approaches that he serves God wrongly, but always with the idea we all serve the same God but maybe in different ways.

Rev. Doko also asked me if we could support more students, maybe first of all to come and visit us here. There seems to be some good students that would do well according to Rev. Doko, and than see we can give them further support in the theological training. About this point I told him we are very limited in the financial aspect as deputies, but maybe it could be organised by personal sponsorship. About the other aspects I told him we can't do much about the situation with Holland unless we get a direct official request from Sumba. He understood that very well.

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We also discussed the upcoming conference of the three provinces, Irian Jaya, Kalamanta Barat and Sumba, Savu, Timor, [N.T.T.] which should have been held last year, and been postponed already twice this year, I suggested to him to try to organise it with Irian Jaya to have it in Sumba. The reason being that the political unrest is too great in Irian Jaya, and if Sumba could host the conference, in consultation with Holland, if they needed some assistance, they could always approach us. This conference was especially to discuss the position of the three theological training centres, and whether it would be good to have one centre that would give higher education. Another item was to discuss whether to have one synod for the reformed churches in Indonesia. Rev.Doko would discuss this with the others concerned.

Just a few small things about the second point. Through circumstances I've been supporting a few consistories so that they can do some mission work; I felt it really should not be done on a personal basis, so I discussed it with Rev. Doko. He agrees with me that the best thing would be that it is done via a church, but he said please do not stop this good support for then the churches can't do that work. So brothers if at all possible let us discuss this item, but if I'm at the wrong address I will follow it up myself. The third point is purely for mission aid and I will follow that up.

J.Bosveld

Appendix 5b - Report on trip Indonesia 10-7-2001 to 22-7-2001

Day 1 Flying out of Perth to Denpasar arriving safely at 4 o'clock.

Day 2 Arrived at Kupang at 11-30 am and shortly later met Yonson, Samuel, Petrus and Melci. We discussed various ways of our church life over lunch. The impression I received is of faithfulness and growth and there is also a good relationship between the GGRi and the GGRM.

All afternoon we talked about the various matters concerning our help, especially the help they receive from Mission Aid. A lot of times I have the impression that they don't really understand how we really operate in our different associations. Usually their ministers have control of it all, although not in all cases. We as Mission Aid had a few requests for some personal help. We discussed this thoroughly and I pointed out to them that we can not go into that direction, it will only causes trouble and jealousy, and what we do for one we also have to do for the other. Where do we start and where do we finish? I think we had a good understanding together. I gave Melci Bulan the money to send to the church in Elim for their church building project, from Mission Aid. Also to Petrus for the church in Bolok, for their church building project. There was great appreciation written on their faces.

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At 4.30 PM to Bakunasi to visit Pdt. Madah Biha. The manse at Bakunasi is advancing very well, the walls are all up, and the start is made on the roof construction. They were forming concrete pillars to carry the roof. Madah Biha only came back the previous day from the ICRC, so our talk centred on the benefit of the conference also in connection for his congregation and the churches. It was hard to come to some definite conclusions. It was remarkable that he responded in a very positive way about his stay in Australia. He really appreciated the reformed way of life which he experienced, in the family worships at different places, how we like to sing our psalms etc, Bible reading with meal times. He has made a start of it at his own place and he is encouraging the congregation to do this at their homes too.

Where in the time past Pdt. Madah Biha was a great lover of hymns, and I suppose still is, in church he has reintroduced the singing of the psalms. For this purpose he has photocopied the psalms, so that in every pew there is a psalm book. He also expressed that the psalms are orientated on God's covenant and works. How encouraging to hear this.

We also touched upon how we can help each other financially. At night again I read the guidelines for deputies, given to us by synod 2000. I felt very strongly reading it, that it would be difficult to apply, restricting us.

Day 3 In the morning, Madah Biha came to the hotel. We discussed reformed literature. They have no means to enable them to purchase the books of Litindo. Although Holland put a lot of good books on the market, they seem to focus on the wider range of reformed background people, the wider market, than being concerned with the support of the churches. The books are available but there is no money to buy them. This also Pdt. Dethan confirmed. Madah Biha really appreciates the *Una Sancta*, which I send him every now and then. He uses this for his sermons. Good material he said. I gave Madah Biha \$3100 for the manse. The exchange rate was about Rp 5640 in Denpasar, this is about Rp 17,500,000. He thought the letter of request was for Rp 15,750,000.

We also talked about the guide lines of support for deputies, and came to the conclusion, that if deputies would work according to these guidelines they would end up doing a lot of work which is not ecclesiastical and they would have too much power. It would not be very practical. The solution is that the deputies are informed about any aid given, and then they can give advice, also where the need is, but they should not be the recipients of the money to distribute. In the past a lot of money has gone missing through the deputies, so no matter what angle you look at it, it all has its difficulties.

In the afternoon Pdt. Dethan and his wife Mary-Lynn came to the hotel and we first had lunch together. We also discussed reformed literature, concerning Litindo Books. As mentioned he had the same opinion as Madah Biha. He would also very much like to have *Una Sancta* as well as the *Clarion*.

Our next talk was about our sister church relationship, Yonson wondered if we had a double standing, for the Korean Churches also have women deacons, and we have sister church relationship with them, and now it seems to be an obstacle. The only church among them is the Galilea Church who still have women as deacons, none of the other churches have women deacons. It is of note that all the ministers in the GGRM have studied at Wai-marangu, and the influence of the reformed faith and teaching are there. Talking later to Madah Biha he confirmed this as very much so.

Day 4 Samuel, Beni and Yafet came to talk to me about the Mission Aid fund which they manage in the project we are supporting. In the meantime Yonson also came and joined in the discussion. In the afternoon I went to Tarus with Yonson, and we talked about how we, as Australian churches, can be involved in the theological training. Yonson himself sees no difficulty in having a higher education training centre in Kupang for all the Indonesian churches. The Australian churches could be involved in sending some lecturers in the future. About supporting some more students, he would talk this over with their deputies, but he was in favour of it.

Later in the afternoon Samuel came, a hard working man. He has to cart water for his garden over quite a distance. He can't spend much time on his pastoral work. He is an evangelist, supported by the Bakunasi consistory. He has a home congregation of about 40 people in Uel which is about 30km out of Tarus. We discussed a few options, but the only way to help is to give him a water pump, which was organised the next day, so that he can spend more time in preparing sermons and attending for the care of the congregation. Sometimes you ask yourself is this something ecclesiastical: Mission Aid or personal? At night we had a nice meal at Yonson and Mary-Lynn's place.

Day 5 Madah Biha took me for lunch to his brother in law's place. There was a request to support him to shift his business to Kupang. He is a tailor, and he lives too far out of the business district. An item for Mission Aid to consider. The request is for Rp 10,000,000 at today's rate \$1800.

Day 6 Sunday morning at seven o'clock Pdt. Madah Biha picked me up, and arriving in Bakunasi the Sunday school was already in full swing, singing together etc. And then the different age group had to come forward, to say the memorised text which they had to learn. The Bible story was about Moses at the burning bush, and the focus was on how many names the Lord has. There was good attention and participation.

While it was still going, the church filled up with people and just after 8 o'clock the church service started. Pdt. Madah Biha had a sermon on 1 John 2:18, Love not the world nor the things in the world, for the love of the Father will not remain in you. Very appropriate, seeing he only just came back from the ICRC.

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He mentioned a few of the spender of the great Babel out there. The singing was from the psalms, which he had re-introduced.

After the church service I had a meeting with the deputies who are responsible for the theological school. First of all we discussed what is the result of the conference held in Jayapura? The re-action was that it would be too difficult to set up a higher theological training centre for the three provinces. It may be better, to shift Wai-marangu to Kupang and make that of a higher standard and quality. I posed them the question how can the Australian churches be actively involved? At the moment they couldn't give me an answer, for they first had to discuss this at there upcoming synod, but they really expressed appreciation to know that we also care for them. Secondly I asked them what they thought about letting Pila Njuka and his family return to Indonesia, after only two years of theological studies. After a long discussion among themselves, they advised against it.

In the evening I attended the Galilea church. The sermon was on Lord's Day 28, a sermon on being actively involved in participating in the Lord's Supper which was to be held the following week. The whole service with the singing of psalms etc. spoke of a reformed character.

Day 7 Monday morning Yonson came to the hotel and we talked some more about the sister church relationship. Also our discussion drifted to the benefit of the ICRC. Although Holland had sponsored them as members of the ICRC already four years ago, faithful and true church, only recently they had send two ministers to investigate to see if they could establish a sister church relationship. To Yonson this was a bit of a puzzle.

In the afternoon I was picked up for the seminar in Bolok, about 12 km out of Kupang. There were about 150 in attendance in a church building that seats about 100 people. There was an exceptional good response to both topics. The first was the responsibility of parents to bring up their children, and the second one was the task of the youth. There were even a few who asked me if I could stay longer and talk more about these topics.

Day 8 Attended to Mission Aid matters.

Day 9 Arrived at Waingapu airport and took the bus to Melolo, arriving at Rev Doko's place. I was made most welcome. At night we went to Pdt. Mitingu, which is about 14km away up in the hills, but half way up the hills the motor bike stopped and we were stranded in the dark. Back home we talked about the letter I had taken along from Rockingham, with a lot of questions, I took note of them to give Rockingham an answer.

Day 10 I had a long talk with Pdt. Doko, about the church situation, and the theological training. He also is of the opinion that the school would be better of

in Kupang. He said anything is better than to close it down completely, which Holland wants to do. The Board and the people generally don't want that. They see the necessity of having a Theological Training Centre. After this we went to Pila's sister, to give her some aid from Mission Aid for her youngest child who has a liver problem, and there was no money to go to the hospital.

Later in the afternoon Pdt. Mitingu came and we discussed the questions of the deputies. His opinion is that it would be good if the Australian churches are willing to give them support. It will be a point of discussion on their synod. Concerning Lintindo books they know that they are there but they have no money to buy them. If the Australian churches could help them especially for their library, that would benefit the students. They would be very much in favour, if the Australia churches could send one or two lecturers a year, again this also will be discussed at synod. We also talked about the aid given to the two consistories, for them to be able to do some mission work. Hanggaroru is establishing itself very well at the moment. They have gatherings of up to 50 to 60 people and they also have started with a church building. This is what Mission Aid is supporting. Kataka has called a student who has just finished his study to serve there. Pdt Mitingu, Radja and Doko's advised to let Pila finish his study before he comes back to Indonesia. Pdt. Radja who is also a docent at the collage with Pdt. Doko. Regarding theological training, they both thought it would be very beneficial if the Australia churches could send a lecturer once or twice a year with an interpreter. For instance Yonson and maybe next year Edwin. It would be a refreshment course for the docents and also instruction for the students. Pdt. Radja will be chairman of the synod and he said he make it a point of discussion. It also would be brought to the attention of the board of the theological school.

Concerning Litindo books, they said Holland does not help them to buy any, not even for the library of the school. It would be appreciated if Australia could give some of these books to the library and maybe subsidise ministers in buying some. They also expressed concern that they had not received any pay since May. This makes it very difficult for them and leads to a very negative attitude toward the whole training in Waimarangu.

Day 11 Pdt. Doko and Mitingu both expressed their joy for the information that Rockingham is seeking. They hope that it will develop into some positive results. They said if not, please continue your support, for it is very important that this work keeps going. In the afternoon I took the bus to Melolo to catch the boat on my way home. Home ward bound is always so good.

J Bosveld

Appendix 5c -Deputy Report on Visit to Indonesia 10- 25 June, 2002

Day 1, 10 June: Accompanied by Rev. Van Delden and B. Bosveld from the church of Rockingham your deputy left Perth at eight o'clock and arrived in Denpasar safely.

Day 2, 11 June: Denpasar to Waingapu was a one and a half hour flight. We were greeted by Rev. Doko and Rev. Mitingu whom we invited for a refreshing drink while we discussed our program for the following days. In the meantime we caught up with the news of the churches. It was good to hear that there is positive progress. The church in Kalu, a suburb of Waingapu, is growing and so their church building has become too small to cope. Since the plot of land where the church is built on is too small for expansion they have to look for another block of land. This may need support in the near future. At Hanggaroru and Rendeh, two mission posts, there is steady growth. A church building has been started in Hanggaroru with some help of Mission Aid Australia, and the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman.

Day 3, 12 June: We had arranged to be picked up with the car from the theological school which the churches in the Netherlands still keep to be used for delegations. After a fruitless two hour wait we decided to take a bus to Melolo. A sixty-seven kilometre drive. We were not there very long when the driver with the car also turned up. He had come from Waimarangu, another 15 km further inland from Melolo and had some trouble with the car. We all piled in the car and went up to Kataka, which is another fourteen kilometre drive. There we met up with the consistory of Kataka. The delegates of Rockingham could talk with them to make arrangements regarding supporting their mission work. It was good to see the great appreciation for the support that they receive from one of their sister churches in their struggle to keep up this work. The support that Rockingham gives is definitely not just financial, but also moral, spiritual and by giving encouragement. For them to know that they have brothers and sisters in Australia that take interest and care is really appreciated. It is too much of a burden for the church at Kataka to support their own minister and the two mission posts, Hanggaroru and Rendeh, (for which they get private support) as well as another mission post in Patawang. They could not do it on their own.

Day 4, 13 June: We met a delegation from the consistory of Wandaronggu together with Rev. Mitingu, Doko and Evangelist Stephanus Ndawa Kambombu at our hotel. Stephanus is working in a small village Kanjonga litang, about eight kilometres out of the city of Waingapu. Rockingham can give them especially spiritual support, as well as financial. Again this support gives them a great relief on their heavy burden. O how good to see that the Lord Himself calls His people from every tongue and nation (Revelation 7) and to sit together, pray together and above all to be able to work together, for the well being of Christ church gathering work.

Day 5, 14 June: We then took the bus to Melolo arranging a Bemo to take us to further to Hanggaroru. Rev. Mitingu had counted on us to visit that congregation. They were already waiting when we arrived. There were about thirty-five people present. We were warmly greeted. Last year *Mission Aid Australia* sent them some money to be able to start building their own church building. They first purchased some property. With help from Canada, they purchased timber, which they showed us, and now that the wet season is over they can start building. There has been a steady growth at this mission post. The congregation is getting too large for their meetings in a home. We prayed together and wished each other God's blessings. After leaving some financial support so they could buy onion seedlings for their gardens, we went our way with joy in seeing the work of our Lord also in these remote places so far removed from the technology and culture with which we are so familiar.

In the afternoon we attended a Bible Study family service. These meetings are held in the family homes where family and friends gather together. The service was led by Evangelist Benjamin Rohi who delivered a sermon—length meditation on Hebrews 10:19-39. After his meditation there was a short discussion. A collection was taken to keep up with church work. Although we could not understand the language, we could pray together for God's blessing upon these meetings. Rev. Van Delden addressed the gathering to bring Christian greetings. We can only marvel at the catholic church gathering work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and see the fulfilment of what we sing in Psalm 87, namely; about people of different nations *"in many tongues, one God one faith confessing."*

Day 6, 15 June: On Saturday we talked with Rev. Doko especially about the theological school. He has no difficulty should the planned school for higher theological studies be set up in Kupang, but insists that everything must be in place before it commences. We then took a bus to Melolo to visit Rev. Hau and Rev. Radja and from there went onto Waimarangu to have a look at the lower theological school there.

We had invited Evangelist Stephanus and Yan with their wives to join us for dinner in the evening. However, Stephanus came by himself. Yan was still busy preparing his sermon for the morning service. Yan is a minister in Kalu. It was a very good evening together. It was especially helpful for the delegates of Rockingham for they could discuss the progress of building a house for Stephanus in Kanjonga litang and make plans for his English lessons, etc.

Day 7, 16 June: Sunday morning. After breakfast we were picked up by Stephanus and his wife to go to Kanjonga litang for the church service. On arrival we were first served a cup of coffee while they were putting up a tarp as a lean to the house so that we could have the church service there. The church service was conducted very much like ours, with vatum, prayer, reading of the Ten Commandments, offerings, psalm singing, sermon, etc. The text was taken

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from Ps 26. Good attention was given to the preaching in the midst of all the noises of the animals around us, (pigs, dogs, turkeys).

After the service Rev. Van Delden addressed the congregation in their language. He referred to Eph. 4. "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*". The three of us sang three stanzas of Psalm 26 and Hymn 40: *The churches one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord*. (The three male voices must have sounded very good to them!)

There was no church service Sunday afternoon due to the distance members live away. We relaxed and went for a walk. In the evening we were visited by both Evangelist Stephanus and Yan with their wives. We discussed several matters concerning church life and also talked about the request from the previously held GGRI synod to ask the Australian deputies to invite Yan to Australia for English lessons and acquaint him with the reformed way of the Australian churches. This request was something new to me. I first of all pointed out to him that he has to have a fairly good level of English before he would be considered by the deputies. For this reason it was organised to have some private lessons in Waingapu at the cost of about \$15 per month. This includes two sessions a week. His wife can benefit from it as well. This arrangement will have to be confirmed by the deputies. He also had a request for a motor bike because the members of the church live far apart. However I had to tell him deputies have no mandate from synod for these sorts of things and maybe he could approach Mission Aid.

Day 8, 17 June: On Monday morning we took a bus to Melolo again only to find out that Rev. Doko had gone to Waingapu. We saw him that afternoon for a while and arranged to meet with him in the morning. At night we spent time with Yan and Stephanus.

Day 9, 18 June. In the morning I spent most of the time talking to Rev. Doko about the following points:

1. Because there is very little good reformed literature in the Indonesian language, Rev. Doko strongly promotes English learning among younger people. He considers that if the youth can read only the few books I gave him, like *Patrimony Profile* by WWJ. Van Oene, it would be of great benefit for the churches in the future. For this reason he is fully in favour of their synod decision to ask our deputies to support evangelist Yan (see previous issue) for a trip to Australia for his English lessons etc.
2. In a previous conversation he had asked about some fishing nets for four people. I told him that *Mission Aid* will consider this.
3. On the south east coast of Sumba there are four churches that need their buildings repaired. They are in desperate need of it. It may even be necessary to replace some of them because they are beyond repair. Hearing this, I had in mind to visit these churches, but it did

not eventuate. Rev. Doko pleaded with me to look into it. Some support should be granted, he argued, for they are all our sister churches. They need a place for worship. This also applies to Sabu where the situation is similar. This matter will be put to the deputies as well as to Mission Aid. At times it is difficult to decide just what is an ecclesiastical matter and just what belongs to mission aid.

4. We again talked about the higher theological school. He has no difficulty that it will be in Kupang but reiterated that all the facilities must first be in order. You just cannot run a school in only one classroom. He was on his way to Kupang with Rev. Hau to discuss some of these matters. I asked his opinion about having the school in Waingapu. He would really appreciate it, but the problem there is no email in this town at this point of time. Waingapu had email at one time but because it was used so infrequently the costs were high and now it is no more.
5. Yan had asked me about a motorbike to visit his congregation. Rev. Doko was asked his opinion. He thought it would not be a waste. If granted, the motorbike should not belong to Yan but to the church. The people of that congregation do live far apart.
6. Rev. Doko would like to see that the Australian churches support Yawan Bunda of the GGRC who at the moment serves the church in Tarus. I understood Rev. Doko to think that Yawan would be a great asset for the Theological school as a docent, in particular for Greek and Hebrew.
7. Rev. Doko also expressed thanks for the support Pila Njuka receives and looks forward for his return. At the moment there is no need to put anything into action for his return. We still have plenty of time.

Soon after this I flew to Kupang and was welcomed there by Rev. Dethan and Paul from Sabu with a few others who had waited patiently at the airport. They wanted to talk about a problem that has arisen. It would affect the upcoming synod.

First of all they were not sure if the synod would go ahead or not. I advised them to have a talk together and be very open to each other, not forgetting that we all are on the road that leads to life eternal. Let us have in mind what is best for our salvation and not so much our position for it is a lot better to have a small spot in God's kingdom than a place of acknowledgment where unrighteous dwells. I said to them; *Brothers seek each others salvation have compassion, and if necessary pull each other out of the fire. If you feel that things go wrong, what can you do to save each other?* They had a talk together with the result that they agreed to have the synod in Bolok, (12 Km. out of Kupang) and not in Roti as was first planned. Thus, upon arriving I was straight away into the thick of it all. I tried to encourage them to seek the up building of each other and warned not to tear each other down for we read in Galatians 5 *"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another."* I must say that from both sides they really took notice.

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Day 10, 19 June: After breakfast, Rev. Madah Biha came to the hotel. It was nice to catch up on news from the churches on Timor. He had come back from Holland only two days earlier. He attended the Dutch synod and followed a reformed instruction course. This course aimed at warning of the dangers of the charismatic movement was run in the Netherlands for ministers from reformed sister churches. He had a very good time in Holland. He was able to preach twice. When preaching, Rev Boersma translated. After parting ways, I walked over to Rev. FangidaE place. The brothers that had a conflict had arrived just a little earlier. They were reminded to care for each other in love and concern, as 1 Cor. 1:10 teaches us, *“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* They had already discussed the whole difficult situation with the result that they accepted each other.

In the afternoon I could visit Tarus where they were busy building class rooms for the Junior High school. It was encouraging to see their endeavour for this project. When talking to the prospective principal, he gave good and sound impression regarding running this school. It is expected to be opened in July. According to Rev. Dethan these facilities can also be used for theological training but opinions there differ on this point. Later in the evening Rev. Hau who had arrived from Sumba, came to stay. With him not knowing English, and me very little Indonesian we had difficulty trying to understand each other.

Day 11, 20 June: In the morning, while having breakfast, Rev. Hau and I exchanged a few words with the help of a dictionary and a few bible texts. Then Rev. Dethan picked me up for synod. It was about a twenty minute drive to Bolok. For the opening of synod the church building was fairly well packed to capacity. There were between eighty to hundred people. A few choirs entertained us with some singing. The local shire had some objections against the synod being held for the name Musyafir should not be used because it belongs to the other group. In the meantime about twenty youth aged up to thirty years came to the fore and tried to stop the synod. Six policemen arrived to try to keep the peace. After talking to each other and promising that they would take the barrier away from across the road, this synod could finally proceed. Synod was considering a new name for registration with the civil government. To open synod, Paulus from Sabu held a sermon on Rev. 1:9-20.

At synod there were two representatives from sister churches, namely, Rev. Madah Bihah on behalf of the GGRI and myself. First Madah Biha addressed the synod and than I was given the opportunity. Madah Biha translated my speech into Indonesian beforehand, and I read it in their language. It was much appreciated. The address is included at the end of this report. There were twelve delegates from the churches, estimated age about 35, so this was a very young assembly. The advantage was that they were all there as equals. They very much appreciated that the Australian churches had sent a delegate and I

was asked to sit at synod as an adviser. The entire afternoon was taken up by voting a moderamen, checking the credentials and instructions for agenda items. When the agenda was established, synod decided to form three committees to deal with the different items in the morning.

Day 12, 21 June: The second day of synod was opened with a devotion on Phil. 3:17-21: *Our citizenship is in heaven*. We rose to express agreement with scripture and confession and still standing we sang a hymn. Synod received a few letters, one from Holland with greetings and one from the government letting them know that the request for their name was not accepted. The reason for this refusal was that the other church from which they had previously split had permission to retain name *Musyafir*. A long debate took place to determine whether it was now time to try amalgamating with the 'Reformatie' church (GGRI). There were strong arguments in favour but the majority thought that there was still too much to be sorted out between them. So they decided to apply for civil registration using the name *Gereja Gereja Reformatie Calvinis*. (GGRC).

Day 13, 22 June: Synod started at eight o'clock with a meditation on Eph. 6:10-20. The committees had finished their work. A few items worth mentioning are:

- 1) A deputyship was appointed to make special study of the church order. They need some literature for this and some financial support to be able to come together for their meetings. (Yonson has the book of Van Oene, *With Common Consent*).
- 2) A lengthy discussion took place on how to deal and organise emeritus funds seeing there is no money for it among the churches. I advised them, that according to the church order, they have to provide for this support and if they are unable, since they now have a sister-church relationship with Holland, they can appeal to them for assistance.

Day 14, 23 June: Sunday morning with Rev. Madah Biha we attend church service at Baku Nase. When we arrived, there were five Sunday school classes going with about forty children aged between four and fifteen years. Four of these classes were conducted in the church building. Each had their own corner and there was another one in the consistory room. Just before the church service started they all came together to close with singing and prayer. It was a nice experience. They have eight Sunday school teachers. These come together Saturday afternoon and under the leadership of Madi receive instructions for their task. While Madah Biha was in Holland Madi gave the catechism instruction. There are 13 youth that would like to profess their faith in the month of August. It all seems to be flourishing!

The sermon by Rev. Madah Biha was on 2 Sam 9. It was a preparation sermon for the forth-coming Lord's Supper. The minister, with the elders, visits each household before the Lord's Supper. Madi, who is very good in his English, translated the sermon. The theme was God's mercy in Christ shown to us in

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David's care for Mephibosheth, being as a dead dog. David showed God's mercy, Ps 103, slow to anger and great in compassion. David was a living example, showing the people God's love as he had expressed in so many psalms. And as was fulfilled in Christ. If Christ so loved us, as being dead dogs, we also must love each other.

It was beautiful to be able to sing the psalms, like 25:3 and from 103 a few verses. There is a changeover from singing hymns to psalms, like a few years ago. After the church service a consistory meeting was held, whilst I had a nice opportunity to have a talk to Madi. He is about 26 years of age, has great understanding of reformed or evangelic preaching, and he really sees the difference between covenantal or Pentecostal preaching. It is nice to see this zeal in a younger member of the church. Madi is also the secretary of deputies with churches abroad, so we also had a talk how, when and to whom, we should give support for reformed literature. A little while later Madah joined us, and we discussed the relation between the GGRI and GGRC. I encouraged them to use the bulletin also as a tool for closer relationship. The relation seems to be very good, and they are trying for more pulpit exchange. But of course, the problem is who pays for the travelling cost. Other items we talked about included the request from Sabu and Ngongi (which I mentioned before this is on the south east coast of Sumba) for new church buildings or upgrading them. Also the motor bike for Yan (they didn't think it would be waste of money). And a new church building for Kalu in Waingapu. This was considered to be a necessity for the building is too small and they have no room for expansion.

In the afternoon I visited the GGRC, Galilea church. It was well attended with about 150 people. The service was conducted by a minister from Sabu. On Sunday night I was visited by five brothers. It was the committee working on behalf of Mission Aid, to aid people who want to start something for themselves and need money for it. The intention is that soon as they can, they pay back the loan, so others can use this money again. They gave account of their activity and the impression was of good management.

Day 15, 24 June. Monday afternoon the seminar was held in the Galilea church with about 100 people attending. I delivered my paper on **"The Church Our Mother"** Rev. Dethan translated it. There was good attention and some very good questions were asked. One question was, if the church is our mother, why can't mothers be office bearers? This gave a good opportunity, to impress on them, that in church there is no freedom of speech or of doctrine, only what is revealed to us is allowed to be proclaimed, for the church must be and remain the pillar of truth.

In the evening I had a meeting with the deputies for churches abroad. In the first place they wanted to express their thanks to the Australian churches, for the close relationship which they have experienced over the years. Especially thanks were expressed for sending a delegate to their synod. There was much

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appreciation for the advice and stimulation which they received, plus the help that was given to be able to hold the synod. We talked about the sister church relationship. It was expressed that from the GGRC there is no real push toward sister church relations. This was in reaction to how I addressed the synod. Women in office is still being discussed and worked on, but through seminars like we just had there is going to be a better understanding of God's will in all these things. Regarding Sunday observance their background was different for sure, but they have us as a good example. The plea was: help us in our endeavour to be reformed. This can be through the preaching to understand what God's will is. Then it comes through love and not out of compulsion and rule. They will have a proposal for us to support another student, Yawan, to be invited for more studies especially for theological training.

For the next day I could pack my few belongings and catch the plane that would take me back home. In conclusion, I was very thankful to be able to spend another few weeks in Indonesia. Again it comes to your mind, how God Himself gathers His people from every tribe, tongue and nation. It is wonderful that we as Australian churches are allowed to encourage also our brothers and sisters in Indonesia. Hopefully we can do that both spiritually and financially. Where they have very little limited possibility, the Lord has provided us with much, and let us stimulate also our brothers and sisters here to share in the abundance given to us. Hebrew 13: 16. *"And never forget to show kindness and to share what you have with others; for such are the sacrifices which God approves."*

Address to Synod of the GGRC held in Bolok 20-22- 6-2002

Thank you for inviting a delegate from our churches to your assembly. From the churches of Australia we wish you God's blessing upon your assembly. Seek the things that are pleasing in the eyes of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who bought us by His precious blood, and also poured out His blood for the unity of His body, His church, the bride. That he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Pdt. Eli FangidaE addressed our synod in 1992, and in his address he mentioned the following, "It is our hearty desire to return to the full and reformed truth". That is, he said, to the full and pure teachings of the bible. He asked us to support you with this. Also in 1996 he asked our synod to help, to keep the torch of faith burning. Brothers here at synod, we have tried to help you these many years, but also with our short-comings. Please let us know if we have failed, but we can be assured that through the help extended, the bond between our churches has been strengthened.

The request for acceptance as sister church relation we as yet have not been able to fulfil, but be assured brothers that we are busy with it, above all you are dear to our heart, and through these years of relation I think that we have come a lot closer, we have grown toward each other, and this is a natural thing, for that must happen before a marriage takes place.

Reading through the previous acts of synod, already in 1988 the Australian churches received a letter of request for sister church relationship, not even knowing each other. The Australian churches which you are dealing with, are not so quick for this acceptance, we like to know each other very well before we are married. We like to build each other up in faith which has happened these last few years. At your last synod you again requested us to acknowledge you as sister churches. We have discussed this at length, and came to the conclusion to instruct me to discuss this further with you.

In the meantime be assured that you are close to our hearts, and that we pray for you as assembly, and for your churches, to be faithful and truthful to God's revealed will.

May the mercy of God the Father be upon you. May you be gathered in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And may the Holy Spirit work among you, in brotherly love and harmony. All to the glory and honour of the Triune God. Thank you for letting me address you in this assembly. J Bosveld.

Appendix 5 Part Two - The Churches of the Philippines

Our mandate regarding these churches as decided by Synod 2000 is as follows:

Article 62

Philippines – Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines (FRCP) and Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines (RFCP)

Material:

Agenda Item 12.4.2.3 Deputies Report

Decision:

1. Appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. Keep up-to-date with any new developments among the FRCP and RFCP;
 - b. Lend support to these churches, upon their request, by means of instructive literature that may help build up their Reformed character;
 - c. If funding permits, make a visit to these churches;
 - d. Report to next Synod.
2. Advise the Dutch sister churches that these churches not be directed to come under the influence of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines (CRCP).

Grounds:

- i. Although these churches show the desire to embrace the reformed faith, much learning is needed for them to understand and apply it.
- ii. Only time will tell whether the FRCP and the RFCP are willing to follow the Scriptural and thus Reformed doctrine and practice.
- iii. The members of these churches have very limited resources and badly need true Reformed literature.
- iv. It would be beneficial to all, the FRCA and the FRCP and the RFCP to maintain some face-to-face contact.
- v. There is enough evidence to show that the CRCP does not preserve Scriptures in doctrine and practice as maintained in the Reformed Churches.

ADOPTED

Contact with the Philippine Churches has been very difficult. Many efforts were made to reach them by telephone and e-mail, often without success. Consequently, no visit has been made.

Contacts with the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines

In response to a letter sent to these churches, a letter was received from Rev. Joy M. Vingno. This letter reflects continued bitterness about what happened in their relations with the Dutch sister churches. It questions their motives for having contacts. Rev. Vingno closes this letter with the words: *This is a personal letter. We are going to present this to our consistory.* Request has been made for an official letter from the churches, but no response has been received.

Contacts with the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines

It was not until 18 April 2001 that an email response was received from attempts to contact these churches. This was a short note acknowledging that a letter had been received and expression of thankfulness that we made the efforts to maintain contacts. A further letter was sent by email with request to please inform us whether they received copies of the *Thy Way* magazine and whether this material was helpful. Till this day we have not received a reply to this request.

A copy of the Acts of the tenth Classical Assembly of the *Federation of Reformed Churches – Philippines* held on May 1, 2001 was received by email shortly after this classis was held. The acts show that these churches have been busy with translating the *Heidelberg Catechism* into their own language, looking for appropriate training for theological students, teaching materials for Sunday school, relations with foreign churches, and application for membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches. They also informed us of who had been appointed as deputies. We sent further request of acknowledgement that they have received the literature that was sent in the past, asked if it were helpful and what kind of material we should be helping them with. No response was received. We were informed of the following classis scheduled for December 21, 2001. We sent greetings along with a request to receive a copy of those Acts as well. They were reminded to please let us know the best way we could help them build reformed understanding. We received acknowledgement and gratitude for our greetings but no Acts of these classes and no response of any kind.

Further attempt to phone the cell number that had been given and contact by email all failed. A telephone call to a previously known number only led to a Philippino response proving that those on both end of the telephone could not understand the other. A different number was found a booklet given by the Dutch sister churches. Attempts to phone at first led to the same problems. Finally contact was made with an English speaking person. He serves as a professor in a university in the Philippines. He is a member of this church and would pass on my attempts to make contact. When nothing more was heard for quite some time contact by phone was again attempted but failed. A letter was written to this professor to ask whether the churches were really interested in

contact. A Response was received showing such interest and it was also emphasised that we ought to realise that they, among their churches, have great struggles. The admission of struggles among their churches comes to us as a request for further help. Deputies decided to sent some Reformed literature and as much as possible, keep email contact with this person.

Contact with the Dutch sister Churches regarding the Philippine Churches

Regarding our mandate to *Advise the Dutch sister churches that these churches not be directed to come under the influence of the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines (CRCP)*, we informed the Dutch churches via a meeting held in Perth why we were convinced that these churches should not be directed to seek their theological training from the Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines. The Dutch deputies think the opinion of the Australian deputies, re, CRCP is subjective and not based on documentation. The reference to what happened on the Reformation Day celebrations in the Philippines did not convince them. The Dutch deputy that was also present at that meeting had given a positive impression and reminded us that it was not a Sunday church service. In reply, it was pointed out that we are well aware of the CRCP's ecclesiastical relations with the CRCNA and CRC Australia and after observing what took place at the meetings, it is similar to the reasons for objections to relations on the America continent and Australia. This point was not pursued any further.

For theological training they are now still looking into possibly directing students to the College of the Korean Churches. Alternatively they are also looking into training via the internet. Apparently Mid American Reformed Seminary is busy setting something up.

At a deputies' meeting held in January 2002 we were informed by the Dutch sister churches that they continue contacts mostly with the RFCP. Support was given to build a church building in Bata. The building in Niawa has been completed. It was decided to discontinue having a mission worker in the Philippines because there was not enough for him to do now that the FRCP does not want to receive such help. Some limited help is still being given by way of sending literature. It was noted that some of the RFCP ministers have personal contacts the Protestant Reformed Churches. At the moment the Dutch churches do not have intentions to send other people to the Philippines.

The Dutch churches have little or no contact with the FRCP mainly because they from their side show no desire for such contacts. The Dutch deputies emphasise that they do not want to impose on these churches.

Contact Bro Ramil Sayson

Via the website of the FRC Kelmescott we received some correspondence from bro. Ramil Sayson. He wrote in his e-mails that, after the Lord had opened his

Appendix 5 - Deputies Relations with Sister Churches

heart for the Reformed faith in 1995, "the work He had entrusted to him had slowly but steadily expanded into the 6 provinces of Mindanao Island, one island in Visayas and still growing - to God be the glory! Few independent Pastors and even Pentecostals had caught the vision God gave us [namely of the Reformed faith; vdj] and seen the Light and joined our Mission movement under our direct leadership. However, we believed that each is autonomous in terms of their respective local Church governance as the Lord leads them. Thus at present there are 12 tiny Churches scattered in Mindanao and one in Bohol island with names like Predestinarian Church, Tribal & Grassroot Church, One Way Outreach Church, Greater Grace Fellowship and Grassroot Reformed Church. We had felt so lonely in our hearts and had felt the need for spiritual covering and fellowship of the Lord's Body, but sadly we could not find anyone here in our country that teaches the whole counsel of God and upheld the Reformed Faith which was watered by the blood of martyrs. ... We had come to know you and your Church through a sister who had worked there in Australia as an overseas Filipina worker who had attended church there before. She now lived here in the Philippines with her Australian husband. She was a guest in one of our Churches here late last year, and hearing of our cherishing prayers and teaching, she mentioned your Church to us."

In his e-mails he writes about himself and the situation he and his churches are in. Our deputyship did not receive any mandate to develop new contacts in the Philippines. For this reason we passed the information on to the general secretary so that in the next report to synod he can mention this request for help. Perhaps one of the churches can take the initiative to investigate this cry for help and can come with a proposal to the next synod. In the meantime we pass on this information to the consistories so that they can consider this request. If desired we would like to provide you with the correspondence received.

Proposal:

Synod appoint deputies to with the following mandate:

Concerning the Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines:

1. Continue to support these churches in a well considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
2. If funding permit, as yet to visit these churches in an effort to establish better contacts.

Grounds:

- i. These churches appear to be struggling and need help.
- ii. One can only really learn what is happening among these churches and how they fare by face-to-face contact.
- iii. These churches no longer receive help from a mission worker sent by the Netherlands.

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- iv. These churches are in closer proximity to us than the Dutch churches.

Concerning the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines:

1. Determine whether there is still any willingness for contact and if not inform them that further contact will be terminated until they show willingness.
2. If there is willingness for contact, support these churches in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.

Grounds:

- i. Contact has been established only through one person and it is not sure that his opinion reflects the attitude of all the churches.
- ii. If these churches are willing to receive it, they need well-considered support.

Concerning Bro Ramil Sayson

Proposal:

That the churches, as yet, be informed about this matter with the suggestion that one of the churches may take it up further.

Grounds:

- i. All new matters should come from the churches
- ii. Although the general secretary has been informed and requested about this matter, the churches have not received official notice.

Appendix 5 Part Three -The Guidelines

Concerning our mandate: *To adopt the Guidelines for Support and to ask deputies to keep refining these guidelines;*

The present Guidelines are:

- a) There shall be good cooperation and coordination with sister-churches, who also offer support to the same churches. The same principle applies to aid-organisations within our own churches.
- b) Each request for support must be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent via these deputies, who will be asked to supervise its distribution and use and who will be asked for a report and an account.
- c) Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.
- d) Each request for support should be well documented and include:
 1. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 2. What purpose the project has;
 3. What length of time it will take;
 4. And the expected goal of the project.
- e) Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles
 1. Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;
 2. Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;
 3. Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;
 4. Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;
 5. Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;
 6. Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;
 7. Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported,.
 8. Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;

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9. And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given
- f) The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.
- g) The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.
- h) The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.

Although these guidelines may appear good on paper, some of them do not work in practice. We draw synod's attention to the following points:

Concerning the first guideline: *a) There shall be good cooperation and coordination with sister churches, who also offer support to the same churches. The same principle applies to aid-organisations within our own churches.*

1. For there to be good cooperation and coordination may sound good on paper, but it is much more difficult to obtain in practice. Thus, for example, to get this cooperation our sister churches in the Netherlands have sent up a new organization that is to co-ordinate all financial help to churches such as in Indonesia. While acknowledging that this organization is still in its infancy it has not functioned very well. Straight away a number of questions come to mind.
 - a. What kind of powers does the new organization appointed by synod receive?
 - b. Is it able (i.e. ecclesiastically correct) to over-rule decisions of deputies appointed by the same synod?
 - c. Is it in the province of a synod to appoint a committee that coordinates the work of other organizations such as a mission aid that give charity and local churches that are busy with mission work?
 - d. What happens when there is disagreement among these organizations?
2. Deputies have received no mandate nor had any contact with, for example Mission Aid, Children of the Light or any other organization or individuals involved in supporting the churches and its members in Indonesia. Deputies question whether any such mandate would be ecclesiastically possible? These organizations are busy doing works of charity that are not considered to be ecclesiastical.

3. There has been some contact with the sister Churches in the Netherlands regarding support of some individuals of Indonesia as well as in relation to theological training. There has been some good cooperation when support training for theological students. However, at times, different insight into the direction to be given lead to different approaches for giving support. For example, in Indonesia, the Dutch sister churches have been looking into possibly sending theological students to an interdenominational college in Jakarta while we, as deputies, have been encouraging the Indonesian churches to continue their own theological training and if necessary and helpful, to establish a college in Kupang.

Proposal: Change this guideline to read as follows: *Deputies are only to give support in the ecclesiastical context. When working in the same area with sister churches, there should be consultation and as much cooperation as possible. Care should be taken not to duplicate support that may already be given by other organizations.*

Please note: By this proposal a distinction is made between *sister- churches* who also do ecclesiastical work and *other organizations* who do work of charity. We realise that there may be some overlap and therefore the stipulation in the last sentence of this proposal.

Question: Deputies requests Synod's judgement on whether this guideline is only meant for deputies or applies to all the churches within the bond. For example, deputies have become aware of support that the church of Rockingham initiated with some of the Churches in Indonesia to do mission work. The Church of Rockingham has not contacted the deputies about this matter in any official way. The deputies have not contacted the Church of Rockingham either. Was it our task? Our question to synod is whether in view of this guideline, which requires *consultation and cooperation* with sister churches, abroad should also apply to churches within the bond.

Concerning the second guideline: *b) Each request for support must be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent via these deputies, who will be asked to supervise its distribution and use and who will be asked for a report and an account.*

1. This rule assumes that deputies in the sister churches, (for example, Indonesia) function well, but in practice, they do not. Several things must be kept in mind.
 - a. Lack of communication, travel and financial possibilities in these countries hinder much of the deputy work. Just to organise a meeting of deputies, first days of travel are

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required to give notice of such meeting. Once organised and decisions are made, it can take months to write a letter and get it properly signed. Help may be needed to pay for postage of letters to be sent.

- b. Lack of educational opportunities means that deputies' work falls on a small number among those in Indonesia and especially when dealing with those in other countries where communication must be in a foreign language. At times these deputies request and receive help from members of supporting committees or individuals to write their letters addressed to these same committees. This defeats the purpose of this regulation. It only becomes a hindrance to the churches that need support.
 - c. Lack of proper housing and facilities make it difficult to maintain proper archives and correspondence. Some live in homes comparable to our summer time camping. Where do you keep a box full of letters in a thatched home (compare to a tent). It is easy for a letter to be lost or destroyed by an unexpected rainstorm etc.
2. The social structure of Indonesia along with great poverty makes this rule put a lot of pressure on their deputies and especially those that can somewhat converse in the foreign language and have direct contact with supporting committees and individuals.
 3. In Indonesia society much more is based on trust and with the above mentioned additional problems the stipulation that these deputies are to supervise distribution and give account is viewed as impossible. It is perceived as - these people make it impossible for us to receive their help.

Proposal: Change this guideline to read: *Where practically possible involved the deputies of the churches support when giving this support.*

Concerning the third guideline: c) Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.

1. This stipulation is fine for deputies while keeping in mind that the determination to what builds up the biblical reformed character of church-life is quite subjective. For example:
 - a. It is very difficult for these people to convene a synod because the food and travel bill is impossible. Should deputies be involved with this kind of charity support?
 - b. Seminars where lectures have been given have been organised. Again, support is required to feed the people that come together.

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- c. Support has been given for them to publish a Church Bulletin We cannot read the Indonesian and cannot determine just how "up building" it is.
2. This stipulation would not and should not apply to charity organizations with whom, according to Guideline a) deputies are to cooperate.

Proposal: Leave this guideline, as is.

Concerning the fourth Guideline: *d) Each request or support should be well documented and include*

- (1) what initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;*
- (2) what purpose the project has;*
- (3) what length of time it will take;*
- (4) and the expected goal of the project.*

1. This may, be a good guideline for the deputies here in Australia, but, as shown with respect to the first one, it would not work very well among the Indonesians.

Proposal: Leave this guideline as is with the understanding that it applies only to the Australian deputies, not to the Indonesian deputies.

Concerning the remaining guidelines:

These guidelines are all fine. Section e gives enough room so that they can be used as guidelines. They cannot become rules. Sections f, g, and h, are fine and should be taken for granted.

Summary:

Proposal: To adopt the proposed changes to the Guidelines for Support and to ask deputies to keep refining these guidelines;

- a) Deputies are only to give support in the ecclesiastical context. When working in the same area with sister churches, there should be consultation and as much cooperation as possible. Care should be taken not to duplicate support that may already be given by other organisations.*
- b) Where practically possible involved the deputies of the churches support when giving this support.*
- c) Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.*

d) Each request for support should be well documented and include

- (1) What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;*
- (2) What purpose the project has;*
- (3) What length of time it will take;*
- (4) And the expected goal of the project.*

e) Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles

- (1) Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;*
- (2) Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;*
- (3) Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;*
- (4) Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;*
- (5) Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;*
- (6) Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;*
- (7) Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported.*
- (8) Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;*
- (9) And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given*

f) The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.

g) The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.

h) The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.

Grounds:

1. For proposed changes as argued above
2. For mandate to refine – this guideline is not a simple matter and only practice can show how well the really work.

Appendix 5 Part Four - Rationale for giving support

In agreement with *Guideline for Support* we submit the following points regarding support that was initiated in the past and still continues as well as support that has been initiated or is being proposed by this report:

Presently Running Projects:

1. Sending Reformed Literature to the *RFCPh*

- a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. Receive the literature being sent.
 - ii. Distribute and use the literature.
 - iii. Make requests for more such literature.
- b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. Build up greater understanding of the Reformed faith and practice.
 - ii. Build up greater understanding of Reformed Church polity and practice.
 - iii. Show that we have care for them.
- c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. No set time.
 - ii. To be reviewed at least every half year.
- d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. As described in 'b' above.

2. Supporting Pila Njuka to study theology in Canada

- a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. The churches show need and call for help in receiving men well trained in theology.
 - ii. Pila Njuak to show faith in the Lord, interest and ability in the study.
- b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. Help build the Reformed character among the Indonesian churches
 - ii. Eventually make it possible for the Indonesian Churches to establish their own theological training.
- c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. Initially until Pila Njuka finished his training
 - ii. To give support and advice for the Njuka family to return and reintegrate into Indonesian society and among the churches.
- d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. That the Indonesian churches have competent men so that they can set up their own theological training centre.

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3. Supporting the Reformed Bulletin published for the churches in Timor
 - a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. The churches are to publish this bulletin
 - ii. They are to send a copy to deputies (via email)
 - b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. Help members (most who are really poor) to learn of the Lord and how to apply His word in daily life
 - ii. Help give unity among the members and the two church GGRI and GGRC
 - c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. One at a time – a bulletin must be published and sent before support is given for the next one
 - ii. To be reviewed at least every year – this review should include determination of whether these people are eventually able to pay for cost of publishing
 - d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. See 'b' above.
4. Support some ministers to continue to make communication possible.
 - a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. They must communicate on a regular basis
 - ii. Keep deputies informed about the kind of support required to keep communications open
 - b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. To maintain contact with these churches
 - ii. For these churches to maintain contact with us
 - iii. For those who are competent help in necessary translating
 - c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. Indefinite
 - ii. To be reviewed at least every year
 - d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. See 'b' above.

Proposed support projects

5. To support Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC to study in Australia – pending Dutch sister church agreement and Synod's approval:
 - a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. The GGRC have already requested for this study
 - ii. Yawan Bunda must – and has already been – studying English in Indonesia
 - b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. For this brother to learn more English so that he can avail Reformed literature in the English language.
 - ii. For ministers to have access to Reformed literature will have a positive effect on the congregations they serve
 - iii. For ministers to witness well-established Reformed Church life will give better view of their own aims.
 - c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. Three months
 - d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. See 'b' above.

6. To support Rev. Yan Pariamalinya of the GGRI to study in Australia – pending Dutch sister church agreement and Synod's approval:
 - a. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - i. His own consistory makes the request – which has already been done
 - ii. His own consistory is to submit this request through their own deputies
 - iii. This brother must study some English in Indonesia and show ability – as he has already done
 - b. What purpose the project has;
 - i. For this brother to learn more English so that he can avail Reformed literature in the English language.
 - ii. For ministers to have access to Reformed literature will have a positive effect on the congregations they serve
 - iii. For ministers to witness well-established Reformed Church life will give better view of their own aims.
 - iv. Having him in Australia for three months helps deputies to know him with a view of possibly considering this brother to continue with more studies.
 - c. What length of time it will take;
 - i. Three months
 - d. And the expected goal of the project.
 - i. See 'b' above.

Appendix 6 - Deputies For Relations With Other Churches (Presbyterian)

Appendix 6a - Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

Mandate

The mandate given by synod 2000 was:

[Article 64]

1. To convey to the PCEA our disappointment that they did not interact with the statements accepted by Launceston 1998.
2. To ascertain whether there is still a willingness with the PCEA to discuss these statements on the basis of Scripture and our mutual confessions.
3. If there is a willingness to discuss these statements, if possible via face to face meetings and in a forum which is deemed most suitable by deputies.
4. To assess the PCEA final response and come with recommendations to Synod.

[Article 88]

5. To instruct the deputies for the PCEA to convey to the PCEA that we were wrong in stating that the RCN does not discuss areas of concern at all with their (Presbyterian) sisters.

Contact

Contact with the PCEA has continued to be difficult and irregular. Although there have been a number of e-mails, there are only two official letters of response from their Inter-Church Relations Committee. A brief report of the communication follows:

1. Our first letter communicated the decisions of Synod 2000 as per Articles 64 and 88.
2. In subsequent e-mails we clarified (in response to queries) what we meant "... *that they did not interact with the statements in a meaningful way...*".
3. In response Rev Gadsby advised that they
"*... as a Committee cannot speak for the PCEA in 'answering' your Statement of 1998, and our Synod has given its answer as it saw fit at the time*".

Nevertheless, Rev Gadsby agreed that

"... to go into the matters of concern in much greater detail has merit ...".

"But," continued Rev Gadsby,

"we would like you to clarify something for us. I refer to the issue of whether the matters you raise with us are true-church/false-church matters, in your view. ... We would appreciate the Deputies reaction to this question as a precursor to further interaction on the matters discussed the

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FRCA Statement of 1998. Will you discuss with us ON THE BASIS OF our being a true church, or is it with a view to your deciding WHETHER OR NOT we are true church?"

4. In reply, we pointed to Rev Veldman's speech at their Synod of 1999 which addressed these points.
5. Subsequently, we received an official letter from the Inter-Church Relations Committee, dated 6 November 2002 (copy attached). In this reply, the Committee reiterates the 'sticking point', namely that they would like to see recognition as True and Faithful Churches preceding the further discussions. They also go on to suggest that our decisions with respect to other churches result in double standards in our dealings with them. Further, they suggest that in our approach to them we "*almost seem to treat [them] as immature churches who need to justify*" themselves to us. It is noteworthy, that in all this, they have explicitly avoided interacting with and discussing the Statements. In concluding this letter they write:
"What we ask from you is a recognition by your Synod that the PCEA is a true and faithful church. The 'matters of concern' may then be discussed on that basis of mutual recognition. Ecclesiastical unity within Australia between our federations will certainly require much more discussion of 'matters of concern,' both from your side and from ours. But cannot you take that first step in 2003?"
6. We responded to the PCEA with a letter dated 12 Dec 2002 (letter attached). In this letter we i) acknowledged the concerns they raised, ii) pointed out that our synods had implicitly recognised them as true and faithful, and iii) asked them again whether they were willing to make a commitment to truly delve into the issues we had laid before them.
7. The PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee responded with a letter dated 28 Feb 2003 (letter attached). In this letter, the Inter-Church Relations Committee repeated its request for official recognition from our federation before further discussion takes place. They concluded by stating that "*Depending on the outcome of your Synod, we may then speak further about wider discussions about 'matters of concern'.*"
8. In summary, the PCEA is looking for recognition as True and Faithful Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ as a pre-requisite to further discussions about areas of concern.
They seek this because they feel:
 - i. aggrieved at our treatment of them, which they feel is more in the line of "*an immature church*" rather than co-equal churches of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 - ii. the FRCA are operating with "*multiple double standards*" in their dealings with themselves and

other churches, including those of similar lines to the PCEA.

Discussion/Evaluation

Synod has mandated the deputies to assess the PCEA final response. In the final letter, the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee makes a number of contentions. Evaluating their response is difficult, for ultimately communication between the parties included both the verbal, personal discussions over the years and also the official communications and the decisions of synods. At the same time, there are also the reports to synod. Whilst these don't have the same status as the Acts, they are nevertheless the basis for synod decisions and are also published and thus read by a wider audience that includes members of the PCEA. Your deputies can really only evaluate the PCEA response in the light of the published material.

In the light of this material, we would like, first of all, to make the following observations.

We suggest that decisions taken by synods with respect to the PCEA have not always been clear and logical. Consider the following examples:

Our churches have declared the Westminster Standard (1985, Art 88, grounds 5) and the Westminster Confession (1987, Art 82, consideration 3) to be reformed confessions, yet there is further discussion, for example, about the doctrine of the church (See Acts 1990, Art 77, considerations 13-17 and recommendation 5a).

Synod 1987:

Considered (3) that *"employing the biblical directives as confessed in Articles 27-29, BC, the deputies have amply shown that the PCEA demonstrates a strong desire to adhere to the three marks of a faithful church"* and (5) that the *"report of the deputies demonstrates that there is a oneness in desire to serve the Lord according to his Word between the FRCA and the PCEA"*;

In summarising the deputies' evaluation as per the three marks only drew attention to one matter that required further attention and that was in relation to church discipline.

The only other acknowledgment of differences that give cause for concern come in a brief consideration (7) referring to the letters of brs. Dekker and Numan that: *"... there remain differences between the PCEA and the FRCA. As a number of their remarks touch on the essential marks of the church, ongoing discussion is needed"*.

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Yet, without further proof of incomplete research or faulty reasoning by the deputies, Synod 1987 was only prepared to state that *"employing the biblical directives as confessed in Articles 27-29, BC, the deputies have amply shown that the PCEA demonstrates a strong desire to adhere to the three marks of a faithful church"*.

Further, Synod gives the idea that the two federations are well under way towards sister relations, because deputies are instructed that *"Rules for ... sister relations should be mutually discussed and accepted before the establishment of sister relations."* (1987, Art 115, D3). This was then done at a meeting in November 1988 (Acts 1990, Art 77, observation 4).

Synod 1998 reported:

1. *"as far as the matter of children in the covenant is concerned, deputies conclude that 'Although there is the possibility that there are differences of accent, the Deputies have no indication that in the preaching or publications other (unscriptural) opinions about the position of the children in the covenant are taught or allowed to be taught'".* Therefore the Deputies state that they *"do not consider this issue as being an impediment to recognising the PCEA"*; also
2. *"that the PCEA's manner of supervising the Lord's Supper table and their Supervision of the Pulpit 'are two areas of concern, which are of such weight that they need to be dealt with before the FRCA enter into sister relations with the PCEA"*

Yet again, without showing that these conclusions were wrong, Synod decided that 3 statements were necessary:

1. *"To offer the PCEA sister relations as a first step towards full unity if they can agree to the above mentioned statements about the Fencing of the Lord's Supper table, the Supervision of the Pulpit, and the place of children in the covenant"; and "Apart from the three areas of concern, the PCEA gives evidence of faithfulness to the Word of GOD, maintaining the Reformed confession"*.

These examples show that some of the decisions and conclusions made by synods don't always follow logically from the observations and considerations that are mentioned.

- 2.1 The PCEA alleges the FRCA are operating with *"multiple double standards"* in their inter-church relations. What does a survey of the past Acts of synods suggest?

- a In 1975 Synod offered sister church relationship to the Presbyterian Churches of Korea (1975, Art 82). This was done despite the fact that the *"investigations into the Presbyterian*

Church of Korea ... by deputies ... could not be finalised" (1975, Art 82, 3), but basically because the GKN *"have decided ... to enter into full correspondence with these churches"* (1975, Art 82, 4).

- b In **1983**, Synod declared The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan to be a *"true and faithful church"* (1983, Art 72) without providing any supporting documentation or reasoning. This decision is then taken again sometime later (see 1983, Art 78). Also the same Synod declared, on the basis of oral reporting and references to material from our sister churches, that the EPCI and FCS are *"faithful Churches of the Lord"* (1983, Art 75). Subsequently, in 1985, Synod declared, in response to appeals, that these two decisions *"were taken with undue haste and without due consideration"* and deputies were instructed to *"thoroughly investigate the RPCT, the EPCI and the FCS and submit comprehensive reports to the Churches and to the next Synod ..."* (1985, Art 43).
- c In **1987**, Synod dealt with an extensive report on the EPCI. Of interest in the final adopted proposal is that firstly, Synod deplores the fact that *"the deputies did not adhere to their mandate with respect to the marks of the true church"*. Secondly, at the same time, Synod in its own evaluation of the EPCI's faithfulness with respect to the marks, it is satisfied that (i), as we can determine from the 'Code', *"membership in the church and admission to the sacraments ... is in accordance with reformed, biblical principles"*, and (ii) that, as the EPCI *"maintains the Westminster Confession of Faith"* its practices with respect to the Lord's table can be known (1987, Art 79, Consideration 9.b.3). Synod did, however, acknowledge that *"personal and direct evaluation of this mark can only be done by a visit to these Irish churches"*. The final decision with respect to the EPCI was to offer them *"the relation of temporary [contact]"* (1987, Recommendation 3).
- d The **1987** Synod, in dealing with the FCS, was aware that *"adherents who faithfully attend the worship service are allowed to let their children be baptized"*. This point, however, was not considered an obstacle in coming then to the decision reaffirming that the FCS is a faithful church of the Lord, and offering to move towards sister-church relations with them (1987, recommendation 2,3).
- e Questions about these decisions with respect to other Presbyterian churches were also put to our delegates during a question session at the April 1991 Synod of the PCEA. The first question pointed out that the FCS had been recognised by our sister church GKN and asked how we would respond to the GKN. Our delegates answered that *"we had ..."*

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recognised the FCS in 1983 already. We added that this could indeed be seen to be an inconsistency on the part of the FRCA in that we did not recognise (yet) the PCEA." (Acts 1990, Report page 141). A second question *"related to how it was possible that the concerns we had now with the PCEA did not prohibit recognising the FCS in 1983. In answer, we noted that more data and greater understanding of the Presbyterian world had developed since 1983."* (Acts 1990, Report page 141).

- f Similarly, the visitors at the 1999 Synod of the PCEA had to deal with questions about the differences and about recognition. We refer to questions 1 and 2 and the respective answers as summarised in the report of the visitors (Acts 2000, pages 165-166). Especially their answer about our understanding of the implications of true and faithful is significant:

"We believe that recognition as true and faithful is really the same as offering Sister Church relations. If we say yes to true and faithful, it must eventually follow that we will also have Sister Church relations. We have identified areas of concern (as outlined in my speech) which prevent us from offering you Sister Church relations at present." (Report of delegates, Acts 2000, p166).

- g It is clear, from the letter of the PCEA (6-11-2002) and also from previous reports and discussions, that the inconsistencies in our decisions over the past decades continues to cause them confusion and disappointment. Although deputies have responded to this, previous Synods have never felt it necessary to give clarification and set the record straight.
- h An important question could then be 'Why has our approach to the PCEA been different than with other churches?' The material referred to shows that:
- a. The FRCA have made declarations about the faithfulness of other churches on the basis of a far less intensive studies of their doctrine and practice.
 - b. The FRCA has a sister relationship already for many years with the PCK.
 - c. With both the EPCI and the FCS, Synods have previously been clearly moving to intensified relationships.
 - d. In more than one instance Synod has been happy to use a church's standards as means of evaluating the church's doctrine and practice.

Although outside the control of the FRCA, several developments, that bypassed us within the Reformed-Presbyterian Churches, have tended to isolate our

churches. Further, these developments have significantly minimised, both the impact of our efforts to discuss areas of concern and also any remaining chance the FRCA had to be taken seriously by the PCEA. The developments we refer to include:

- a. The ongoing role of the ICRC within Reformed and Presbyterian church circles. Our isolation stems from the fact that we are the only major Reformed church bond not participating in the ICRC. Both the PCEA and our sister churches are members of the ICRC.
- b. The continuing contact which the PCEA has with our 'sisters' in the ICRC. The PCEA, themselves, draw attention to the fact that our sister churches in the ICRC (CRC, FRCSA and PCK-Kosin) *"have never challenged the PCEA's status as a true church, despite years of contact through the ICRC"* (Letter 6-11-2002). Here we point out that the Constitution of the ICRC declares the purpose of the Conference to be (amongst other things) *"to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ"*.
- c. Recognition of the PCEA by our sister churches in the Netherlands. The PCEA themselves draw attention to this development in their letter stating that *"the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands have, despite protests by the FRCA, proceeded first to recognise the PCEA as true and faithful, and further, have given the PCEA sister-church status."* (letter 6-11-2002).

The PCEA also considers that we *"almost seem to treat [them] as immature churches who need to justify [themselves] to [us]"*. Is it possible that in our approach to them we have not treated them as mature equals, struggling together to move forward on a path of ecclesiastical unity? Several points ought to be mentioned here.

1. The PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee asks for *"recognition by your Synod that the PCEA is a true and faithful church. The 'matters of concern' may then be discussed on the basis of that mutual recognition."* (Letter 6-11-2002)
2. Consider the following earlier statements by synod:
 - a. (Acts 1987, Art 115) *"Since contacts should be mutually beneficial to both bonds of churches, areas of concern, while not constituting impediments in acknowledging that there is a oneness in desire to serve the Lord according to his Word, should remain topics of discussion"*
 - b. (Acts 1983, Art 96) *"that true believers and true churches ought diligently and circumspectly to discuss from the Word of GOD which is the true church so to practise unity of faith and ecclesiastical fellowship with churches which publicly and continuously dispise the Word of God and the true faith"*

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3. We also considered that there might have been developments that caused offence to the PCEA. We refer to the:
 - a. Pronouncement *"that the PCEA as a church is in fact sick with the ailment of pluriformity"*. (Visitors Report, Acts 1992, page 143; see also PCEA response Acts 1992, page 145 and Acts 1992, Art 72, consideration 2c and consideration 4).
 - b. The PCEA also has difficulty with the word "pluriformity" (see PCEA response Acts 1992, page 145; the Deputies letter Acts 1992, page 147 and Acts 1992, Art 72, consideration 5).

In spite of various pleas for more thorough interaction on the Statements prepared by Synod 1998, the PCEA has declined to do this.

At this point it is also worth noting that already in 1988 the PCEA, in a letter, pointed out:

"that the issues of concern you raise are all matters which were thoroughly discussed with us by the former group of deputies. The outcome of those discussions last year was that both 'sides' say that there is very substantial agreement among us on these points, even if there is differences in emphasis and terminology. Some members of the Committee wondered what could be gained by going over this same ground all over again." (Letter from PCEA Acts 1990, page 188) The letter continued *"Maybe more could be gained by another face-to-face meeting, if this could be arranged, but I have to say that Synod informally expressed the view that we should not commit ourselves to the considerable expenditure which would be involved in a trip for several members to W.A."*

Already in 1998 the deputies reported that they considered

"that our past contact with the PCEA has not always been easy, and that somewhere in the process communication has to a large extent broke down. The result is that the PCEA is sceptical about whether it is really our desire to enter into sister church relations. Thus it is necessary for us to approach them in a manner which shows that it is really our desire to enter into sister church relations with them." (Report of Deputies to Synod 1998, Acts 1998, page 127-128).

We also note that synods have recognised mutual discussions as a preferred way of working towards further expression of the unity of faith. Over the last years, however, communication between the FRCA and PCEA has been difficult and often flagging. There may be various reasons for this. The last letter from the PCEA gives insight as to the most likely reasons for this. Perhaps because of these perceived difficulties the fire has gone cold at their end.

At the same time, it needs to be said that our deputies have in the past earnestly tried to convey the reasons for working as we do. On several

occasions our deputies have pleaded for an open dialogue on the matters of concern. We refer to:

The speech of our delegates at the PCEA Synod of April 1991:

"... Brothers, we have travelled far to come here. We have not done so to find out whether you serve the Lord and love Him; had we not already known that we would not have come to Taree. But exactly because we know you love the Lord and want to serve Him have we felt it necessary - and we felt free - to say these things to you. Please receive our words in the spirit of love in which they were intended. And we plead with you to consider these matters seriously, for the glory of our common Lord and Saviour, and the well-being of His one catholic Church. We would dearly love to talk of these things further; we need each other. And it remains our prayer -we say this emphatically- it remains our prayer that we may one day be one in the unity of the true faith." (Acts 1992, page 137-138).

The speech of our delegates to the Synod of the PCEA 1999.

"... From this report it becomes clear that the Dutch have a different approach than we have and perhaps from a Presbyterian point of view, also a much more likeable approach. Why then do we still persist to discuss the areas of concern first, before entering, into sister relations? The point is the FRCA have a different approach. We can only become truly united when there is also real unity in faith on the basis of God's Word. That's why the FRCA deem it necessary to identify and discuss the areas of concern beforehand. This is not a matter of mistrust, but rather of honesty to receive more clarity in this respect before we can move forward to ecclesiastical unity in our country. As to our Dutch sister churches it should be noted that in their local contact, for example with the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, they too want to iron matters out more specifically than in their international contacts before getting closer.

As to the issues we want to discuss with you, Synod Byford 1994 did not consider them beforehand already as impediments for entering into a sister relation. That's why it gave deputies the following mandate,

to study/discuss:

- a) what weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern?
- b) whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress with contact/relations?

Dealing with these two questions, instead of internally getting divided on a 'yes' or no answer, deputies decided to take a

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somewhat different approach in proposing the adoption of a number of statements. Commenting on this approach deputies write,

"Our past contact with the PCEA has not always been easy, and somewhere in the process communication has to a large extent broken down. The result is that the PCEA is sceptical whether it is really our desire to enter into sister church relations. Thus it is necessary for us to approach them in a manner which shows that it is really our desire to enter into sister relations with them."

The approach of proposing a number of statements may seem somewhat different to the past, yet is not altogether totally new. I may refer here to a meeting of the ICRC held in Zwolle, The Netherlands, 1993, which adopted a report of the Committee for Theological Affirmation. This report tackled the differences between Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in a similar way.

Summarizing, we do believe that there still remain areas of concern, which are of such a weight that they need to be dealt with before the FRCA enter into sister church relation with the PCEA. We consider it necessary to receive more clarity in these matters before entering into a sister relation. Accept from us that this does not mean that we mistrust you. It is our sincere desire to progress in our contacts, so that unity in Christ can be expressed both in word and deed.

It is against this background that you should read the decision taken by our last synod, which states, "to offer the PCEA sister relations as a first step towards full unity if they can agree to the statements about the fencing of the Lord's table, the supervision of the pulpit, and the place of children in the covenant."

It is our sincere prayer that you can accept these statements as a faithful expression of our mutual beliefs so that our next synod can establish a full sister relation with your churches. We hope that it becomes clear from these statements that we are basically one in our beliefs, although we have a different historical background.

I like to make clear that the intent of these statements is not to make you subscribe to a new confession. The point is, when comparing each other's confessions, there appears to exist a

remarkable consensus between Presbyterian and Reformed Churches that adhere to these confessions. As such we already have an 'agreed statement', for which we are thankful. In the statements presented to you we have tried to highlight this consensus. It is surely not our aim to bind you beyond what you confess in the Westminster Standards, which are so well loved by you. And we can understand this, as in the same way the Three Forms of Unity are dear to our hearts.

Yet on the basis of what you and we have subscribed to we would like to come to a mutual agreement of these statements. Again not to bind you above your confessions but in such a way that you recognize yourself in these statements, and can say, "Yes, this is what we believe." On the other hand, if you consider us to be wrong, unscriptural in these statements, please help us, so that together we may grow in understanding what the Lord asks of us in coming to greater unity. We believe that the points raised in the above mentioned statements touch some central parts of the doctrine. In the statements we have pointed to Scripture and the Confessions and also to certain practices as you have recorded them in your Directory for Public Worship. We hope that from your side there will be willingness to discuss them with us. We are open to a dialogue with you about these matters on the basis of Scripture and confession.

Scripture calls us to care for each other as members of Christ. We have to be a hand and a foot for each other. We do care for you, very much so, as you care for us. In that caring lies the concept of love and encouragement, as well as bowing over the Scriptures to see what is true and how to live according to the truth. It has been said that we differ on some issues due to our different historical background. It is indeed true, the Lord has not led us through the same history. But now the Lord has brought us together in one country. We are sure He has not done this without a purpose. Let us therefore sit down together and see whether our divergences can stand the test of Scriptures.

If you don't want to travel this road with us, please let us know why you find it difficult to do this. I repeat, don't consider these statements as mistrust

from our side. Rather we seek you in love with the heartfelt desire that together we may serve the Lord according to His Word. It might well be that we need a lot of patience with each other, but let us go forward in faith trusting that the Lord will bless the discussions.

In a letter to the PCEA (dated 12-12-2002) your deputies stated that our synods have, implicitly recognised the PCEA as true and faithful with reference to Synod 1987, recommendation 2 and synod 1990 recommendation 2, which state that in the PCEA there is a desire to serve GOD according to His Word. This is also implied in the speeches of the delegates to PCEA (see point 3.8 above). In particular, we refer to the answer of our delegates to one of the questions:

"The FRCA does not see the PCEA as a false church; our Synods have said that we see in the PCEA a real desire to serve God. The fact that we come to attend your Synod, and raise these issues with you, is evidence that we seek true unity. We invite an open dialogue with you on the points we have raised. That is not to say the statements are a discussion paper - they are formal statements by our Synod." (Report of delegates, Acts 2000, p166).

Conclusion & Recommendation

Essentially after some 20 years of discussion, the churches need to bring this matter out of limbo. The PCEA have made their view and hence their request quite clear. From our side, it is important that we clear the air and consider how to move forward.

We consider that:

1. in view of our implicit recognition of the PCEA as outlined above; and
2. in view of our belief that "wherever possible, all true churches of Christ ought to engage in drawing closer to each other in order that their common commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord may be more clearly and fully manifested" (De Jong, PY, 1980, The Church's Witness to the World); hence
3. sincere effort be made to re-engage the PCEA in effective dialogue.

We further consider that:

1. Past decisions and comments may have given rise to the complaints as voiced by the PCEA; and
2. The PCEA have not interacted further, and appear unwilling to interact further, with the Statements adopted at Synod 1998; hence
3. Synod should make a definitive response to the letter of the PCEA by means of direct communication to their synod.

Respectfully submitted

Appendix 6 - Deputies' Report Relations Presbyterian Churches

Rev J Poppe (Convener)

Br LA t' Hart

Br H Olde

Br J Plug

Br LA Schoof

Attachments:

1. Letter from PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee dated 6-Nov-2002
2. Letter from FRCA deputies to PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee dated 12-Dec-2002
3. Letter from PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee dated 28-Feb-2003
4. Letter from PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee dated 16-May-2003



Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Inter-Church Relations Committee

Convener: Rev. W Peter Gadsby, BSc, BD

9 Craiglea Close, Taree NSW 2430, Australia

Wednesday, 6 November 2002

The Correspondence Clerk
Deputies for Relations With Presbyterian Churches
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
c/- Mr J. Plug
47 Balston Road,
Albany, WA 6330

Dear Brothers,

We have received. on 21.10.2002, your recent undated letter regarding relations between the FRCA and the PCEA. Thank you for writing.

Our Committee has carefully considered your letter, in which you respond to our question for further clarification about the 'matters of concern' by furnishing a copy of Rev. Veldman's speech to the PCEA Synod 1999.

You will recall that in my e-mail of 4.09.2002, I wrote:

Your suggestion that we attempt to go into the matters of your concern in much greater detail has merit. but we would like you to clarify something for us. I refer to the issue of whether the matters you raise with us are true-church/false-church matters, in your view. In other words, are you wanting to discuss these matters in order to reach a conclusion as to whether or not the PCEA is a true church? Or are these matters that may be fruitful to discuss as a form of mutual edification as true churches of the lord Jesus Christ?

We would appreciate the Deputies' reaction to this question as a precursor to further interaction on the matters discussed in the FRCA Statement of 1998. Will you discuss with us ON THE BASIS OF our being a true church, or is it with a view to your deciding WHETHER OR NOT we are true church?

With the greatest respect, we would suggest to you that simply sending us a copy of what we already received in 1999 falls well short of responding rightly to our questions. We fully accept that there are 'matters of concern' from your side. You

will appreciate that we too have 'matters of concern' about the FRCA, but we have not raised them as impediments to recognizing you as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is because we do not rate our 'matters of concern' as *affecting* the issue of whether you are true churches.

You on the other hand, have continually raised your 'matters of concern' as a reason for not reciprocating that recognition. So we ask, again the simple question: Are your 'matters of concern,' in your view, true church/false church matters? Do you wish to discuss still further these matters in order to reach a conclusion as to whether or not the PCEA is a true church?

Regrettably, we are gaining the impression that you continually raise these matters as a way to avoid proceeding to give us the same recognition as true church, which we gave you many years ago. You almost seem to treat us as immature churches who need to justify ourselves to you!

Now this might be more understandable for us, if you did not operate with multiple double standards in this matter.

We note that as long ago as 1983, you recognized our 'sister-church,' the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), as 'true and faithful.' Subsequently, you wondered if this was a decision taken with 'undue haste and without due consideration,' and appointed deputies to reconsider it. In 1987, you reaffirmed your statement about the FCS. In 2000, your deputies recommended that the FRCA 'phase out' formal contact with the FCS (among others), but this was rejected by Synod. Your Synod then mandated deputies to study further the 'outstanding areas of concern with FCS, etc.'

Furthermore, the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands have, despite protests by the FRCA, proceeded first to recognize the PLEA as true and faithful, and further, have given the PCEA sister-church status.

Still further, you continue to seek to develop relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, despite:

1. the RCNZ is a sister-church of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia; and
2. the RCNZ has now given the PCEA sister-church status.

You will perhaps understand that we are a little confused about your continued insistence on exploring your 'matters of concern' with us, when not only are the above facts true, but you also have extended to and continue sister church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin), the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, and the Canadian Reformed Churches, all of which are members, with the PCEA, of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, and who have never challenged the PCEA's status as a true church, despite years of contact through the ICRC.

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Brothers, you have not explained to us why you raise these 'matters of concern' as a barrier to recognizing the PCEA as true church, when you did not do so with out sister-church, the FCS, and when your sister-churches have not done so with the PCEA! Why are these issues so much more weighty in our relations than they are in others? Or are we right in thinking that you are simply wanting to procrastinate in the matter of recognizing the PCEA as true church?

What we ask from you is a recognition by your Synod that the PCEA is a true and faithful church. The 'matters of concern' may then be discussed on that basis of mutual recognition. Ecclesiastical unity within Australia between our federations will certainly require much more discussion of 'matters of concern,' both from your side and from ours. But cannot you take that first step in 2003?

Yours in Christ's service,

W. Peter Gadsby
Convener, PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee



**Presbyterian Church of Eastern
Australia**

Inter-Church Relations Committee

Convener: Rev. W Peter Gadsby, BSc, BD

9 Craiglea Close, Taree NSW 2430, Australia

12 December, 2002

Esteemed brothers,

Thank you for your letter dated 6 November, 2002.

Deputies have discussed your letter. Brothers, you have noted in your letter, and also questioned, the multiple double standards that the FRCA seems to have. You also requested the FRCA to recognize the PCEA as a true and faithful church, and then to discuss the areas of concern on that basis.

As deputies we would like to remind you of the fact that our synods have implicitly recognized you as such. Synod 1987 (see recommendations 2 page 14) and Synod 1990 (see recommendations 2 page 48) state that it is evident that in the PCEA there is a desire to serve God according to His Word. As deputies we cannot say more than this, since it is outside of our mandate given by Synod 2000. We will place your letter of concern on our next synod's table for discussion and consideration.

Our question to you is whether you are willing to make a commitment to truly delve into the issues we have laid before you. For us the guarding of the pulpit and the fencing of the Lord's table are important issues. It is clear that we do not see completely eye to eye on these matters. If we are wrong in our application of the Scriptures and the Confessions, please make clear to us where and how. We plead with you as deputies, and with your Synod, not just to brush us off as narrow-minded sectarians. Our goal like yours is to be faithful to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and to serve Him in accordance with His Word.

Wishing you God's indispensable blessing, also as your Synod meets together again early next year.

With brotherly greetings,
In the service of our Lord and Master,

Rev J Poppe
convenor

Br J Plug
correspondence clerk



Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Inter-Church Relations Committee

Convener. Rev. W Peter Gadsby, BSc, BD

8 Craiglee Close, Taree NSW 2430, Australia

Friday, 28 February 2003

The Correspondence Clerk
Deputies for Relations With Presbyterian Churches
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
c/- Mr J. Plug
47 Balston Road, Albany, WA 6330
Dear Brothers,

We were delighted to receive your letter of 12 December 2002 in which you stated that FRCA Synods have 'implicitly recognized' the PCEA as a true and faithful church. This is something we have been seeking from you for many years, and now it seems that it was there *all* the time!

What we now ask is that your Synod should make this an explicit recognition, as we said in our closing paragraph in our letter to you of 6 November 2002:

What we ask from you is a recognition by your Synod that the PCEA is a true and faithful church. The 'matters of concern' may then be discussed on that basis of mutual recognition. Ecclesiastical unity within Australia between our federations will certainly require much more discussion of 'matters of concern,' both from your side and from ours. But cannot you take that first step in 2003?

We respectfully request that you recommend to your Synod that it formally recognize the PCEA as a true and faithful church. Depending on the outcome of your Synod, we may then speak further about wider discussions about 'matters of concern.'

We look forward to hearing from you again on this matter of your recommendation to the 2003 FRCA Synod.

Yours in Christ's service,

W. Peter Gadsby
Convener, PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee



Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Inter-Church Relations Committee

Convener. Rev. W Peter Gadsby, BSc, BD

8 Craiglee Close, Taree NSW 2430, Australia

Friday, 16 May 2003

The Correspondence Clerk
Deputies for Relations with Presbyterian Churches
Free Reformed Churches of Australia
C/- Mr J Plug
ALBANY WA 6330

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the great and precious Name of our Risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

I am writing to convey through you to the meeting of your Synod, the warm greetings of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, and our hope that our Lord will guide your deliberations unto his glory.

At its recent meeting in Maclean, NSW, the Synod endorsed (§03.27.2) this Committee's actions in our discussions with you, and went on to resolve (§03.36):

Synod express our warm greetings onto the FRCA Synod, meeting in Rockingham in July, trusting that the Lord of the Church would guide them in all his will, and bless their deliberation to his glory.

Synod direct the Inter-Church Relations Committee to maintain contact with the FRCA deputies, and endeavour to progress the discussions about the matters of concern between us on the basis of the FRCA's recognition of the PCEA to be a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are looking forward to hearing from you again, after the meeting of your Synod in July. We will send you a copy of our 2003 Reports and Minutes when these are available.

Yours in Christ's service,

W. Peter Gadsby
Convenor, PCEA Inter-Church Relations Committee

cc. Members of PCEA ICR Committee

Appendix 7 - Report of the Deputy for Revision of the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents

appointed by Synod West Albany 2000

1. MANDATE

- 1.1 In a letter dated 14 July 2000 the Second Clerk of Synod 2000 informed me that I had been appointed "to the Deputyship for the Revision of the Church Order as per attached Article 101 of the Acts of Synod West Albany 2000".

Since this Article does not contain anything except the above mentioned name of the Deputyship, my name as Deputy, and that of br.J.Eikelboom as Alternate, the mandate had to be traced from the Acts of Synod.

I have derived my mandate from Article 42, which reports the following synodical decision:

7. *To delete the italicised words in the Church Order, as well as the indented sentence at the end of Article 41, and to amend the Ecclesiastical Documents where necessary (Acts 1996, Appendix N).*

Grounds:

With the introduction of classes, it is necessary to update the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents to reflect our new situation.

- 1.2 I understand that the word "Revision" in the title of the Deputyship must be interpreted as no more than "updating the text" of a few articles of the Church Order and the Ecclesiastical Documents.

As far as the Church Order is concerned, these articles are:

1. Article 41, concerning which synod decided:
to change Article 41 Church Order so that it reads: "...
Classis shall convene at least once every six months in person ..." (Acts Article 36);
2. Article 45 , where the second sentence shall read:

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As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders (Acts Article 42).

3. Several articles, concerning which synod decided:
to delete the italicised words in the Church Order, as well as the indented sentence at the end of Article 41 (Acts Article 42).

- 1.3 What Synod could not foresee is that, in addition, a small number of standing synodical decisions also require updating or retraction.

Some of them must be amended as a result of the synodical decision regarding pulpit exchange:

Not to reappoint a deputy for this matter.

Ground:

Since classes have now been formed, this matter belongs to their jurisdiction. (Acts Article 77)

This means that the synodical decisions of Byford 1994 Article 15, Kelmscott 1996 Article 72, and Launceston 1998 Article 36 have been superseded by the decision of Synod 2000 Article 77, and therefore automatically retracted.

However, as a result of the decision to form classes, other standing decisions and documents need amending. They will be summed up and dealt with later in this Report.

- 1.4 Another result of the formation of classes is that some documents will no longer be used by our synods.

They are:

Ecclesiastical Certificates:

- Form 1: Certificate of admission to the office of minister of the Word (the responsibility of the classes)
- Form 3: Certificate of release of minister (by classis)
- Form 4: Subscription Form for ministers of the Word (the responsibility of the classes)
- Form 6: Form for emeritus declaration (the responsibility of the classes)

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Guidelines for church visits (the responsibility of the classes)

The question arises: Are the classes still obliged to use them after they have been updated, or do the classes have the freedom to amend or even replace them?

I have taken my mandate to include the need to deal with this question as well. A sideline is that it may be a useful means of showing the implications 'updating' of these Documents has for the classes.

- 1.5 This all makes it necessary to indicate whether and/or where some action is required from Synod 2003, after it has been approached via consistory and classis, and, if deemed necessary, from consistories and classes.

It is then also advisable to have this Report completed and sent to the churches before the classes are convened.

- 1.6 It also appears necessary to replace outdated terms such as "Church Council" in a number of standing decisions. Although this may not be seen to have been included in my mandate, I hope to make a few suggestions, which, hopefully, will be taken up either by Synod 2003, or by one of more consistories and in the church political way (via classes) put on the agenda of Synod 2003.

2. CHURCH ORDER

- 2.1 In accordance with the decisions taken by Synod 2000 changes have been made to Articles 41 and 45, as indicated under 1.2.

The italicised words have been deleted in Articles 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 28, 31, 35, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 74, 76, and 79.

- 2.2 The new texts have been printed as Appendix 1.

3. ECCLESIASTICAL DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 As a result of the synodical decision to form classes the following changes in the Ecclesiastical Certificates are required:
 - a. The current text of Form 1 presupposes that Peremptory Examinations are conducted by synods. Since Synod West

- Albany 2000 this is the responsibility of classis. Therefore the name "Synod" must be replaced by "Classis".
- b. Although those who have completed their theological training at the Kampen Theological University are no longer conferred the degree of "candidate", this term can be maintained as being used in Articles 6 and 8 of the Church Order.
 - c. In Form 3, the Certificate of Release of Minister (by classis), the lines that refer to the outdated "classis church" require replacement.
 - d. In Form 4, the Subscription Form for Ministers of the Word the name "classis church" should be replaced by "classis".
 - e. In Form 6, the Form for Emeritus Declaration, "classis church" should be replaced by "classis".
 - f. In the Regulations for the financial aid of students the reference to the classis church should be deleted.
- 3.2 If the classes continue the use of the Guidelines for Church visits, the following changes are required in the footnotes:
- a. In Article 44 of the Church Order "(synod)" should be deleted, even twice.
 - b. In Article 3 the italicised lines should be deleted.
 - c. In Article 43 "(classis church)" should be deleted.
 - d. In Article 31 the italicised lines should be deleted.
 - e. In Article 74 "(classis church)" should be deleted.
- 3.3 In the Rules for Synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia the following changes should be made:
- a. Sub 1.2-10: "Classis Churches" should be: "Classes".
 - b. Sub 1.2-16: "Questions according to Article 41 of the Church Order" should be deleted, because this belongs to the duties of Classis.
 - c. The numbering of the items on the Draft Agenda of synods should be amended accordingly.
 - d. Sub 1.4 the line "Visitation reports will not distributed" should be deleted.
 - e. 5. Sub 2 the second part should be replaced by: "Every classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. These delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as possible".

- 3.4 All these tasks have been completed.
Because some of the Forms and documents are very lengthy, and there are only a few changes in them, not all of the documents concerned have been printed in full as Appendix 2. (For a publication of the amended full texts see under "9. Full texts")

4. STANDING SYNODICAL DECISIONS

- 4.1 Due to the synodical decision to form classes, some of the standing synodical decisions need to be declared outdated, or should be amended.

- 4.2 The first is the decision of Synod Launceston 1970, Acts Article 47, re: Eligibility and examination of candidates. It reads as follows:

The following rules for the eligibility for call in our churches of Bachelors of Divinity are adopted:

- I. Regarding Bachelors of Divinity who have been trained at the Theologische Hogeschool at Kampoen or the Theological College at Hamilton, Canada, it is ruled that they will be preparatorily examined by an ecclesiastical meeting of our churches. If there is a real possibility that the candidate concerned will be called by one of our churches, this examination will have the standards and validity of the peremptory exam. In this case the preparatory exam will also include the subjects of the peremptory exam.*

The examination will be conducted by the examiners in a meeting in which two churches are proportionally represented by at least four delegates, while the third Church Council, after having received a written report, has to give approval.

- II. Regarding Bachelors of Divinity who have not studied at the theological colleges of our sister-churches the following rules are adopted:*

a. The value of their theological education and scientific ability will be examined by the Senate of one of the colleges of the sister-churches.

b. The candidate shall contact the Church Council of the church of which he is a member, which Council informs the deputies-examiners, who make the

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necessary arrangements with the said Senate in Canada or the Netherlands for the examination.

- c. After the examiners have favourably reported the candidate is declared eligible for call in our churches in accordance with the above mentioned rules.*

III. As for Bachelors of Divinity who have been declared eligible for call by the foreign sister-churches after their preparatory examination, it is ruled that they, if called by one of our Australian churches, will as yet be peremptorily examined by our churches in an ecclesiastical meeting.

There are several reasons why this decision can no longer serve our churches:

- a. It is questionable whether it is still necessary to have rules for extreme cases as meant in section I. They originate from the days when the churches had not, as yet, been well established.
- b. Most theological training institutes no longer confer the degree of Bachelor of Divinity.
- c. We no longer use the name "Church Council" for a consistory.
- d. In the life of our churches the "ecclesiastical meeting" consisting of two churches, had been replaced by synod or an extraordinary synod, and since Synod West Albany 2000 by classis.

There are a few options:

- i. The most radical is that Synod 2003 declares this decision outdated, and therefore retracts it.
- ii. Another option is that sections I and III of this decision are declared outdated and retracted now that classes have been formed; and that the wording in section II is amended.
- iii. Church politically this can all be carried out by Synod 2003, because it is a matter which is common to the churches, according to Article 30 Church Order; but if one of the consistories is of the opinion that the 'church orderly' way must be followed because it is considered to be "a new matter", it may be able and willing to formulate a proposal for the next classis, to be passed on to Synod 2003.

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- 4.3 The same applies to the decision of Synod Launceston 1985, Acts Article 81, that says:

Synod decides to re-affirm and re-state the decision of Synod 1970 Article 47, whereby 'Classis' is replaced by 'Synod' for preparatory and peremptory examinations, and to amend the Rules for the examination accordingly.

Synod decides to supplement the decision of Synod 1970 as follows:

At the peremptory examination the Deputies of Synod or some of them (Article 5 C.O.) shall act in that capacity.

This decision be declared no longer to be valid, along the same lines as described above.

- 4.4 Article 44 of Synod Armadale 1990 (re Article 6 Church Order) mentions the decision *that at a Colloquium Doctum the calling church may be represented by two delegates.*

Synod 2003 should declare this decision outdated, because colloquia now belong to the duties of the classes.

- 4.5 In the decision of Synod Kelmscott 1996 Article 27 re "Edifying word" (ad Article 18 Church Order) the addition "(Synod or extra-ordinary Synod)" should be deleted, as many as three times. This matter is now the responsibility of the classes.

- 4.6 Classis churches and second appeal churches no longer function in our federation. Therefore the decision of Synod Launceston 1998, Article 125-13 (regarding Articles 31 and 35 Church Order) can be declared outdated.

- 4.7 Synod Launceston 1985, Acts Article 81, decided concerning Article 41 Church Order:

in the sentence commencing, "The chairman shall ask" to replace "Classis" with "Synod",

its ground being:

Article 41 has been on the Agenda of our Synods.

This decision must be declared outdated because Article 41 is no longer on the Agenda of our Synods.

- 4.8 The decisions on Church visitors (Article 44 Church Order), made by Synod Armadale 1990, Acts Article 26; Synod Bedfordale 1992, Article 26-13; Synod Byford 1994, Article 130-14; and Synod Launceston 1998, Article 121, must be declared outdated, because the matter of church visits is now the responsibility of the classes.

5. ACTION REQUIRED

- 5.1 Action from Synod 2003 is (or may be) required concerning the items mentioned under 3.1, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8.
- 5.2 Action from classes and/or consistories may be required concerning the items mentioned under 3.2, 4.2, 4.3.

6. APPENDIX #(a)

The amended text of some Articles of the Church Order

ARTICLE 3: The calling to office

A. All office-bearers

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto.

The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the local regulations adopted for that purpose.

Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for the approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices.

The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. From this number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed.

Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons. If necessary the consistory and the deacons may present to the congregation the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

C. Ministers

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought.

The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. Eligibility

Only those shall be called to the office if minister of the Word who

- (1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or
- (2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
- (3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which The Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. Declared eligible

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

- (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the necessary documents to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or
- (2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or
- (3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

- A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:
1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call. Classis shall approve the call:
 - a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, attested by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and
 - b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This classis examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.
 2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.
- B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:
They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.
1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only in case he remains within the same classis.
 2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which The Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From one church to another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of his consistory

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with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry, classis shall (with synod's prior approval) examine him, and upon a favourable outcome allow him as candidate to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, observing the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have recently joined the church

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by the classis in whose area he lives. This classis examination shall be conducted with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call or an appointment to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be appointed for the training of students for the ministry, others may be called for mission work.

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without the approval and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of his consistory to relieve him of his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be instituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be instituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Classis

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shall convene at least once every six months in person. The ministers shall be chairman in rotation, or one shall be chosen to be chairman; however the same minister shall not be chairman twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every classis shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall sign the letter of call.

ARTICLE 44 - Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to classis.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two classes this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way

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of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

Appendix 7b - The amended text of some of the Ecclesiastical Documents

7.1 Form 1 (Re: Article 6 of the Church Order):

CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION TO THE OFFICE OF MINISTER OF THE WORD

To whom it may concern

Classis of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, held on at, has examined according to Article 6 of the Church Order and in accordance with the synodical regulations for the Peremptory Examination:

candidate

who has been called to the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments by the church of

Having witnessed the subscription to the Form for Ministers of the Word by the above mentioned brother, Classis has admitted him to the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments in The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

For the Classis:

..... chairman clerk

7.2 Form 3 (Re: Article 7 of the Church Order):

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OF MINISTER (by classis)

Classis, held at on, acknowledges the advice received from The Free Reformed Church of that the Reverend has accepted the call extended to him by the, and that the consistory of The Free Reformed Church of, at its meeting on (date), has decided to grant the Reverend an honourable discharge from the duties of The Free Reformed Church of, effective as from the day of 20., from which day he shall be deemed engaged in the service of, has decided:

1. to grant the Reverend an honourable discharge from his duties within Classis of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia;

2. to declare that during the period of his ministry in this classis he has been faithful and diligent in discharging the duties of his office, pure in doctrine and confession, and Godly in his walk of life;
3. to provide him with two copies of this Certificate of Release for presentation, in accordance with Article 7 of the Church Order, to the church of, and to Classis, as proof of proper and lawful release of Classis of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and as a testimony of sound life and doctrine.
4. to record its thankfulness for the faithful labour which he has performed during his year stay in The Free Reformed Church of and in Classis of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and on his departure commend him to the LORD and His grace with the fervent prayer that the LORD may confirm the fruits of his labour and cause him to be a blessing within the church which he may now begin to serve.

For the Classis
..... chairman clerk

7.3 Form 4 (Re.: Article 24 of the Church Order):

SUBSCRIPTION FORM FOR MINISTERS OF THE WORD

We, ministers of the Word in The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, signatories to this Subscription Form, sincerely and with a good conscience before the LORD, declare by our signature that we wholeheartedly believe and are fully convinced that all articles and points of doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, are in full agreement with the Word of God.

We promise therefore that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same in our public preaching or writing.

We also promise not only to earnestly reject all errors which conflict with the aforesaid doctrine, but that we shall at all times be willing to refuse and contradict them, doing our utmost in reproving, combating, and helping to resist such errors.

Should reservations regarding the said doctrine arise in our minds at any time in the future we faithfully promise not to propose, teach, or defend them, neither in our preaching nor in our writing, publicly or privately, but to first disclose these reservations to the ecclesiastical assemblies in the ecclesiastical way so that they may examine them.

Furthermore, we promise that we will always be prepared to submit ourselves willingly to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies. Should we refuse to submit ourselves to the judgement of the ecclesiastical assemblies or should we persist in our reservations we agree by that very fact to be suspended from our office. Moreover, should the consistory, classis, or synod at any time upon sufficient grounds and in order to preserve the uniformity and purity of the true doctrine deem it necessary to require of us a further explanation of our opinion regarding any part of the said doctrine, we promise always to be willing and ready to comply with such a request, upon the understanding that by the very fact of our refusal we will be suspended from our office.

However, we reserve for ourselves the right of appeal should we believe ourselves aggrieved by the judgement of the consistory or classis. Until such a decision is made upon such an appeal we will submit to the determination and judgement of the consistory and/or classis.

7.4 Form 6 (Re.: Article 13 of the Church Order)

FORM FOR EMERITUS DECLARATION

Classis, of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, held at on, acknowledges the advice received from the consistory of the Church of, that the Reverend, who has served that church as Minister of the Word since, has requested to be released from the responsibilities of his office.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the said consistory at its meeting of has acceded to this request, consistent with the provisions of Article 13 C.O.

Supported by the favourable advice of Deputies Article 48 CO it now declares:

- 1. that Reverend be granted an honourable release from the responsibilities of his office as from;**
- 2. that Reverend, during the time of his labour within the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, has been faithful and diligent in his office and godly in his walk of life;**
- 3. that Reverend be thanked for the ... years of faithful service which the LORD allowed him to perform in the bond of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.**

Finally, we commend Reverend to the LORD with the fervent prayer that it may please Him to confirm the fruits of his labour.

For the Classis:

..... chairman clerk

7.5 REGULATIONS FOR THE FINANCIAL AID OF STUDENTS

(As amended by Synod 1992, Acts Article 50, and by Synod 1994, Acts Article 56)

(Re.: Article 18 of the Church Order)

- Article 1: Financial aid will be provided only to students who intend to become a minister in one of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia or in one of their sister churches. It will be provided in accordance with these Regulations and the RULES FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS.
- Article 2: Financial aid will be provided only for studies at a college or seminary of one of the sister churches mentioned in Article 1.
- Article 3: Financial aid will be provided in the form of interest-free loans for the purpose of meeting study costs and cost-of-living expenses of the student. Any additional aid for a married student will be provided on the same basis. The church to which the eligible student belongs when he begins his studies has secondary responsibility to provide support, after the student's family and before the federation of churches. The deputies, when assessing the churches, must take into account the financial commitments which the local churches have assumed with respect to the support of needy students.
- Article 4: Students proposing to enrol at one of the approved colleges must comply with the pre-requisites of that college before financial aid will be made available. A student who needs to complete additional studies after having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian university, and before being admitted to a college, may be financially supported by deputies for that time of his study.
- Article 5: In normal circumstances financial aid will be given only for the duration of a normal-length study course at the college concerned.

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Article 6: Payments will be made via the student's parents. In the event that it is considered more expedient to have the payments made directly to the student, a written request to that effect may be made to deputies.

Appendix 7 - Ecclesiastical Documents Review

- Article 7: To assist deputies in determining the student's need for financial aid, they may request information concerning his financial situation from the consistory of the church of which he is a member. Similar information may be sought about the student's parents. For this purpose an Application Form For Financial Assistance will be supplied.
- Article 8: The parents of the student, or - in the case of a student being paid directly - the student himself, shall annually submit a budget of expenditure. Any proposed increase in expenditure must be sufficiently substantiated.
- Article 9: The student must keep deputies informed about his study progress. Deputies may also make their own inquiries at the college or seminary. If the student fails to make satisfactory progress and desires to continue with his studies he may request a continuation of financial aid. This request will be given consideration only if the college senate supports his case. After a second failure approval to continue financial aid can be given only if the failure was caused by circumstances beyond the student's control (sickness, accident etc.)
- Article 10: The maximum amount of financial aid will be determined by deputies, if necessary after consultation with the college or seminary. Deputies will take into account the income of the student (including that of his wife if he is married), and the support from his parents or from any other source.
- If a student is not eligible for government support for tertiary education, then financial aid will be given by deputies only in exceptional circumstances.
- Article 11: Circumstances which will tend to raise the level of financial aid needed will be considered by deputies on their merit.
- Article 12: The financial aid may include an allowance, as determined by deputies, for the purchase of books. This

allowance is for the purpose of starting the student's library (dictionaries, commentaries, etc.). Proof of purchase of these books must be supplied by the student.

- Article 13: A student whose financial position changes due to either an increase or decrease in income or of assets must inform deputies accordingly, as this may affect the extent of financial aid received by him from the churches.
- Article 14: A student who desires to end his studies in the case he no longer wants to become a minister, or for any other reason, must inform deputies accordingly as soon as possible.
- Article 15: The financial aid will end at the time when the student, after having completed his studies and ecclesiastical examinations, becomes the responsibility of a church. If the student does not receive a call from a church the financial aid will end five weeks after his preparatory examination.
- Article 16: Subject to the provisions of Article 18, repayment of the provided loans will be waived once the student has been ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 1, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry, in the same order.
- Article 17: The provided loans or any outstanding amounts thereof must be repaid and are instantly claimable when:
- a. the student terminates his studies.
 - b. the student decides not to become a minister.
 - c. the student, after having completed his course of studies, does not within two years make himself available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 1.
 - d. the student does not accept a call extended to him or, after having accepted a call, withdraws and does not accept another call.

Appendix 7 - Ecclesiastical Documents Review

- e. the student ceases to be a member of the sister church either by his withdrawal or by excommunication.
- f. the student, having become a minister, withdraws from or is dismissed by the church or sister church concerned.

In the case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment by instalments.

Article 18: If it becomes clear that too high a level of financial aid was given in the past, the total sum of excess money must immediately be repaid in full.

Article 19: The obligation to repay loans may be waived in case of sickness, death or in other exceptional circumstances.

Article 20: In any cases for which these Regulations do not make provision deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 21: Deputies must report to the next synod concerning any special actions which were taken.

Article 22: A copy of these REGULATIONS and of the RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS will be supplied to the student and to all who are directly involved in the financial aid to needy students ad Article 18 of the Church Order.

Article 23: In the case of disputes the home church's classis shall adjudicate.

7.6 GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH VISITS

For the changes (to be) made in this document see under 3.2.

7.7 RULES FOR SYNODS OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

For the changes (to be) made in this document see under 3.3.

8. APPENDIX 7(c)

Although it is not included in our mandate, we present the following list of the tasks of Classes and Synods for the convenience of the consistories, which sooner or later have to convene a classis or a synod:

A . Regarding the Classis

Our Church Order defines the various tasks of a Classis as follows:

In Article 41 it says:

The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church.

Other articles mention a number of other tasks:

Article 3: Approval for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

Article 5: Declaring eligible for call, after a preparatory examination, candidates to the ministry.

Article 6: Approving the call of those who have not served in the ministry before, after a peremptory examination;
Approving the call to another congregation of those who are serving in the ministry.
Approving the call to one of our congregations of those who are serving in a foreign sister-church, after a colloquium.

Article 7: Checking the certificates of release from the church and the classis where a minister, called by another congregation, served; which includes: Classis shall issue such a certificate (if the minister concerned does not remain in the same classis).

Article 8: Examining persons with "exceptional gifts", and making further arrangements.

Article 9: Examining ministers who have recently joined the church.

Article 12: Declaring its consent to the relationship between a minister who accepts a call to an extraordinary task and

his church (e.g. when he is appointed to teach at a theological college).

- Article 14: Approving the dismissal of a minister by his consistory.
- Article 15: Approving a consistory's decision to relieve a minister who wants to enter upon another vocation.
- Article 24: Not receiving a minister who refuses to subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity.
- Article 29: Beginning and ending its proceedings with prayer.
- Article 30: Seeing to it that only ecclesiastical matters will be dealt with, in an ecclesiastical manner; dealing only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly, or which belong to the churches in common; not putting new matters on its agenda when the minor assembly has not dealt with them.
- Article 31: Dealing with appeals against decisions made by local consistories.
- Article 32: Checking the credentials of the delegates of the local churches.
- Article 35: Executing jurisdiction over the consistories.
- Article 38: Advising if a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew.
- Article 39: Assigning places where as yet no consistory can be constituted, to the care of a neighbouring consistory.
- Article 42: Receiving in an advisory capacity ministers of a local church who have not been delegated to Classis.
- Article 43: Appointing counsellors for vacant churches.
- Article 44: Appointing church visitors.
- Article 45: Delegating two ministers and two elders to a forthcoming synod; approving the decision made by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod regarding the time and place for a synod to be convened before the appointed time.
- Article 47: Exercising censure over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.
- Article 48: If necessary requesting deputies appointed by synod to assist in cases of special difficulties.
- Article 49: Taking care of its archives.
- Article 50: Seeing to it that the division into classes is observed when churches cooperate in mission work.

Appendix 7 – Ecclesiastical Documents Review

- Article 74: Advising the local consistory before a second announcement of church discipline is made regarding a communicant member.
- Article 76: Appointing a neighbouring church in the case of a minister to be suspended; advising the local consistory in the case of a minister to be deposed.
- Article 79: Advising the local consistory before a second announcement of church discipline is made regarding a non-communicant member.
- Article 81: Classis is not permitted to change the Church Order.

B. *Regarding the Synod*

Our Church Order deals with the various tasks of a synod in the following articles:

- Article 6: Whereas the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod is required at peremptory examinations, synod is expected to appoint such deputies.
- Article 8: Only with synod's prior approval someone with exceptional gifts will be examined by classis.
- Article 9: Deputies shall be appointed for cooperation in the examination of ministers who have recently joined the church.
- Article 14: Synod is expected to appoint deputies for "concurring advice" in case of a minister to be dismissed from his bond with the congregation.
- Article 15: Synod is expected to appoint deputies for 'concurring advice' in case of a minister wanting to enter upon another vocation.
- Article 29: The proceedings of synod shall begin and end with prayer.
- Article 30: Synod shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner. It shall deal with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to the churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.
- Article 31: Synod shall deal with appeals against decisions made by a minor assembly.
- Article 32: Synod shall scrutinize the credentials of the delegates of the minor assemblies, and see to it that delegates of the minor assemblies shall not have a vote matters in which they themselves or their churches are directly involved.
- Article 33: Synod shall see to it that matters once decided upon are not proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.
- Article 35: Synod shall have jurisdiction over the classis.
- Article 45: At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it.
- Article 46: Synod shall regulate the relationship with other churches.

Appendix 7 – Ecclesiastical Documents Review

- Article 47: At the close of synod censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.
- Article 48: Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all matters provided for in the Church Order. Each synod shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed as much as possible for separate matters. Synod shall see to it that written reports on the work of deputies are received.
- Article 49: Synod shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.
- Article 64: Synod shall approve the psalms and hymns to be sung in the church services.
- Article 66: Synod shall appoint a church to proclaim a day of prayer.
- Article 76: Synod shall appoint deputies for advising Classis regarding a minister to be deposed.
- Article 81: Synod shall change the provisions of the Church Order, if this is agreed upon after a proposal had reached it from the minor assemblies.

9. FULL TEXT

The full text of all documents will be printed in Supplement 2000 to CHURCH ORDER OF DORDRECHT as revised by the Synod 1994 of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia with the standing decisions made by their respective Synods.

Respectfully submitted,
Westfield-Kelmscott, 21 July 2000

G.van Rongen
PO Box 163
Kelmscott WA 6991
gvrongen@upnaway

Appendix 8 – Deputies Training for the Ministry

Appointed by Synod 2000

REPORT TO SYNOD 2003

Esteemed Brothers,

1.0 MANDATE

Article 25 of Acts of the 2000 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (West Albany, 3 – 13 July 2000) records Deputies' mandate to:

- (a) collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
- (b) continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
- (c) ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
- (d) continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
- (e) make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" once every four or five years;
- (f) to investigate the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library

Deputies met 12 times to discuss matters concerning its mandate.

2.0 Financial support Hamilton Theological College

Deputies collected A\$213,459 and forwarded A\$194,000 to Hamilton during the period February 2000 to February 2003.

During the period, the churches were levied at a rate of A\$40 per communicant member (in accordance with decision 2 of Article 25 of the Acts of the 2000 Synod).

Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to Hamilton are contained in Appendix A.

3.0 Contact with Theological University Hamilton and Theologische Universiteit Kampen

Deputies conveyed messages of congratulation and fraternal greetings on the occasions of Hamilton's Convocation and Kampen's Schooldag 2000, 2001 and 2002.

Contact with Kampen remained low key. Other than the above greetings, Deputies received the "studiegids 2001 – 2002", the "schooldagkrant 2001", "schooldagkrant 2002" and "studiegids 2002 – 2003".

Deputies received Hamilton's Handbook 1999–2002 and Hamilton's Handbook 2002-2005, financial reports for the years ended 31 December 2000 and 31 December 2001 and Hamilton's budget for the year ending 31 December 2003.

Brother A Van Leeuwen visited Hamilton for the occasion of the official opening of the new library in September 2000. He attended as Deputies' delegate at Hamilton's invitation. Hamilton provided the airfare. Brother Van Leeuwen spoke on the evening and presented a cheque for \$3,000 for the College's Chapel Organ Fund on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Rev C Bouwman visited Hamilton in January 2003 and took the opportunity to attend the meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors. He was made to feel most welcome and given full opportunity to participate in the discussions.

Deputies corresponded regularly with Hamilton's Board of Governors on various issues including:

- (a) The possibility of an Australian representative on Hamilton's Board of Governors.
- (b) Receiving minutes of meetings of Hamilton's Board of Governors, as well as minutes of meetings of Hamilton's Academic Committee and Finance & Property Committee.
- (c) Extending an invitation for one of Hamilton's Professors to visit Australia in 2003.

Deputies wrote to Dr and Mrs J Faber on the occasion of Dr Faber's having achieved a milestone of 50 years in the ministry.

4.0 Publication and promotion

The address for the occasion of the opening of Hamilton's new library in 2000 was published in the *Una Sancta*.

Deputies arranged for the publication of eight (8) "College Corner" articles in the *Una Sancta*, thereby keeping the church membership informed concerning matters at Hamilton, its staff and students.

Deputies wrote to the churches drawing to their attention that Deputies were not aware of any new Australian theological students who intended to commence theological training within Deputies' term. Deputies requested that this matter be given due consideration and that young brothers be encouraged to consider whether they are called to preach the Gospel and minister to the Churches.

Independently of the above correspondence, two young men wrote to Deputies informing them of their desire to train for the ministry in Australia. In the meantime, Deputies have become aware that one of these men commenced theological studies in Kampen while the other now plans to enrol in Hamilton.

5.0 Financial aid to students

Deputies continued to arrange for the financial assistance of one student who graduated early during Deputies' term.

No new requests for financial assistance were received during Deputies' term.

Financial statements detailing the amounts collected and the amounts forwarded to students are contained in Appendix B.

6.0 Hamilton guest lecturer

The last visit from a Hamilton guest lecturer was by Dr C Van Dam during the June and July in 1999.

An invitation was extended to Hamilton's Board of Governors for the next visit.

The Board of Governors decided to ask Professor J Geertsema to represent the College and to fund return airfare for Mrs Geertsema to accompany her husband on the trip to Australia.

Arrangements are being made with the Professor Geertsema to arrive in September 2003 and visit the Perth metropolitan area, Bunbury, Albany and Tasmania.

Deputies estimate the costs of such a visit to be approximately \$5,500.

7.0 Deputies' investigations concerning Australian theological training and library

Deputies have predominantly spent their time pursuing their mandate "to investigate the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library".

Deputies have produced a comprehensive report on this aspect of their mandate which is contained in Appendix C.

8.0 Possible involvement with Hamilton

While conducting their investigations and deliberating concerning Australian theological training, Deputies reviewed the reasons provided by West Albany in their proposal to 2000 Synod and noted a central concern that the churches control the theological training for their ministers.

With that in mind, Deputies wrote to Hamilton's Board of Governors to request their views on having Australian representation on the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors is still interacting with Deputies request. Deputies refer to the material under heading 3.1 "Re Control over Training" in Part 1 of Appendix C which confirms that Deputies:

- (a) have the right to address the Board of Governors on any issue; and
- (b) are welcome to sit in on meetings of the Board of Governors.

Further to that material, a meeting of the Board of Governors held on 5 September 2002 decided:

- (a) The Governance Committee should seek legal counsel regarding the possibilities of changing the Theological College Act adopted by the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario in 1981 to allow for persons not serving in the Canadian Reformed Churches to be appointed to the Board of Governors.
- (b) All copies of items pertaining the agenda of Board meetings should be sent to the Australian deputies at the same time as they are sent to the members of the Board of Governors.
- (c) A copy of the press release of each meeting will be forwarded to the Australian deputies for publication in *Una Sancta*.

As at the date of this report, the legal counsel referred to in paragraph 4(a) above has not yet been received. However, Deputies note the strength of the relationship now in place with Hamilton given the material referred to in paragraph 3 above and the communication channels referred to in paragraphs 4(b) and 4(c) above.

Deputies estimate that the costs of one of the Deputies attending meetings of Hamilton's Board of Governors would be approximately \$3,500 per attendance. The Board of Governors ordinarily meet once per year, in September at the start of Hamilton's academic year.

As Deputies have received no mandate to recommend closer co-operation with Hamilton, Deputies draw this to the attention of the Churches and encourage the Churches to propose that Synod mandates one of the Deputies to attend Board meetings.

9.0 Contributions to Hamilton Theological College

Synod Launceston 1985 decided that in relation to the per communicant member contributions to theological seminaries, the churches should budget for amounts similar to those contributed by our overseas brother and sisters (Act article 58).

A brief overview of the history of financial support to Hamilton since 1985 can be found in appendix C to Deputies report to Synod 2000.

Our Canadian brothers and sister are currently assessed in the vicinity of \$63 Canadian per communicant member, which at current exchange rates computes to approximately \$70 Australian per communicant member.

Having considered these facts and given that Deputies are recommending recognition that establishing our own Australian theological seminary is out of reach for the foreseeable future, Deputies recommend that:

- (a) the contributions for Hamilton Theological College be brought in line with the amount paid by our Canadian brother and sisters; and
- (b) the contributions be reviewed by each consecutive Synod.

10.0 Recommendations

Deputies recommend that Synod decides to:

Recognise that establishing an own seminary is out of reach for both the present time and the foreseeable future.

Appendix 8 – Deputies' Report Training for the Ministry

Recognise that establishing a library should occur simultaneously with the establishment of a seminary.

Request the churches to contribute A\$70 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2004.

Set aside \$5,500 for the costs of a visit to Australia by Professor Geertsema as a guest lecturer from Hamilton, together with his wife.

Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

- (a) collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
- (b) continue correspondence with both "Hamilton" and "Kampen" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
- (c) ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
- (d) continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
- (e) make arrangements for a guest lecturer from "Hamilton" once every four or five years;
- (f) to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible.

With Brotherly Greetings

Deputies send fraternal greetings to Synod and wish the brethren God's blessing on the work to be done.

Rev C Bouwman (Convenor), Br H Faas, Br A Van Leeuwen, Br M Plug

Appendix 9 - Treasury Report to Synod.

Esteemed brothers,

Synod Treasurer's Financial Report

As requested by the convening Church, I herewith submit the **Statement of Receipts, Statement of Expenditure and Statement of Funds for the period 29 February 2000 to 4 March 2003.**

The books are still to be audited by the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott.

Receipts

- Receipts from the Churches have been according to budget with accounts to three Churches (\$3,049.41) still outstanding.
- Refunds are higher than budgeted due to GST refunds and Acts of Synods refunds from the Churches. Synod 2000 paid the full cost of printing which is also reflected in the actual expenditure (Item 14 of Statement of Expenditure)
- Interest was approximately \$2,700 higher then budgeted.

These higher receipts meant that income was some \$3,000 higher then budgeted (excluding the outstanding accounts).

Annual accounts were sent to the Churches at the end of the calendar year and were adjusted to reflect communicant membership numbers as shown in the current year book.

Expenditure

The following points are to be noted on expenditure:

- Synod 2000 costs came in \$6000 under budget mainly due to expenditure on loss of income being lower than budgeted.
- Deputies contact other Churches came in \$15,000 under budget. Of this \$2,200 is for a trip to Indonesia in 2003; no costs for travel to the Philippines and PCEA (\$5,200); no claims for loss of income for delegates (\$1,400); lower travel costs to Albany (\$1,200); and lower travel costs to Indonesia \$1,700) and the Netherlands (\$2,000). Other variations were minor.
- Church visitation/pulpit exchange was over budget due to an extra visit to Tasmania.
- Deputies Training of Ministry was mandated to arrange a gift for the Theological Seminary, but this was not budgeted for by Synod 2000. The cost is shown as an expenditure. (Item 38)
- Synod Archives had no expenditure.

Appendix 9 - Synod Treasurer

- Budget was adequate to cover expenditure by other deputies.
- Synod paid \$5,000 to classis south and \$15,000 to classis north as budgeted.
- Overall the expenditure was \$20,000 under budget.

With the higher receipts and lower expenditure, the Treasury balance is some \$23,000 higher than budgeted, that is, \$48,098.65

Accounts

Synod funds are kept in a cash management account with Challenge Bank.

Draft budget

Letters will be sent to the deputies and the Churches seeking their input into the draft budget. The draft budget will be forwarded to Synod via the convening Church in time for Synod.

Electronic Copies of Reports

These documents have been prepared in Office 2000 software and have been emailed to the convening Church.

With Christian Greetings,

A Hordyk
(Synod Treasurer)

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY
STATEMENT OF FUNDS AT 4 March 2003**

Starting balance	\$58,299.05
Total Income received	\$57,750.41
Total funds	\$116,049.46
Expenditure	\$67,950.81
Balance at 4 March 2003	\$48,098.65

All funds are held in a cash management account with Challenge Bank.

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS FOR THE PERIOD
29 February 2000 to 4 March 2003**

Item	CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE CHURCHES			
1		BUDGET	RECEIVED	OUTSTANDING
2				2003 CONTRIBUTIONS
3	FRC ALBANY	\$7,084.08	\$6,917.04	
4	FRC ARMADALE	\$8,350.17	\$8,388.93	
5	FRC BUNBURY		\$241.25	
6	FRC BYFORD	\$6,029.00	\$6,105.69	
7	FRC KELMSCOTT	\$5,124.65	\$3,286.55	\$1,486.11
8	FRC LAUNCESTON	\$2,984.36	\$1,993.73	\$965.00
9	FRC LEGANA	\$2,260.88	\$1,402.94	\$598.30
10	FRC MT NASURA	\$5,456.25	\$5,744.95	
11	FRC ROCKINGHAM	\$4,250.45	\$4,412.35	
12	FRC WEST ALBANY	\$4,431.32	\$4,605.71	
13	FRC WEST KELMSCOTT	\$5,154.80	\$4,977.41	
14	TOTALS	\$51,125.95	\$48,076.55	\$3,049.41
15				
16	OTHER INCOME			
17	REFUNDS	\$2,500.00	\$5,901.00	
18	INTEREST	\$1,000.00	\$3,772.86	
19	TOTAL INCOME	\$54,625.95	\$57,750.41	
20	TREASURY BALANCE at end period	\$58,299.05	\$58,299.05	
22	TOTAL FUNDS	\$112,925.00	\$116,049.46	

Appendix 9 - Synod Treasurer

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA SYNOD TREASURY STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD 29 February 2000 to 4 March 2003				
ITEM	EXPENDITURE	BUDGET		ACTUAL
1	SYNOD COSTS			
2	TYPIST	\$1,200.00		\$892.50
3	PHOTOCOPIER HIRE	\$0.00		
4	FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT HIRE	\$1,100.00		\$869.10
5	STATIONERY AND CONSUMABLES	\$1,200.00		\$139.75
6	CATERING	\$1,400.00		\$1,096.77
7	POSTAGE AND TELEPHONE	\$500.00		\$173.65
8	PRESENTATIONS	\$250.00		\$164.35
9	MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE	\$800.00		\$704.95
10	LOSS OF INCOME DELEGATES SYNOD 2000	\$11,000.00		\$6,800.00
11	TRAVEL COSTS TO SYNOD 2000	\$5,000.00		\$7,081.94
12	TRAVEL COSTS (REIMBURSEMENT - Classis Fund)	\$5,000.00		\$1,882.00
13	PRINTING ACTS OF SYNOD 2000	\$4,000.00		\$4,929.38
14	PRINTING REPORTS TO SYNOD 2000	\$1,000.00		\$1,869.11
15			\$32,450.00	\$26,603.50
16				
17	DEPUTIES BOOK OF PRAISE RESEARCH	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00
18				\$0.00
19	DEPUTIES REVISE CHURCH ORDER			\$40.00
20				\$40.00
21	DEPUTIES CONTACT OTHER CHURCHES			
22	BOOKS ETC	\$300.00		\$70.00
23	TRAVEL COSTS PERTH / ALBANY	\$1,400.00		\$175.00
24	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2001	\$4,400.00		\$3,521.00
25	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2002	\$2,200.00		\$1,370.00
26	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2003	\$2,200.00		\$0.00
27	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS NZ 2001	\$4,000.00		\$2,326.68
28	TRAVEL COSTS PCEA	\$3,200.00		\$0.00
29	REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS	\$6,000.00		\$4,071.00
30	TRAVEL COSTS (PHILLIPINES)	\$2,000.00		\$0.00
31	TRAVEL COSTS SOUTH AFRICA	\$1,766.00		\$3,266.00
32	LOSS OF INCOME - DEPUTIES OVERSEAS	\$1,400.00		\$0.00
33	UNA SANCTA SUBSCRIPTIONS	\$600.00		\$441.00
34	INCIDENTALS (postage, telephone, typing, printing etc)	\$900.00		\$224.25
35			\$30,366.00	\$15,464.93
36				
37	DEPUTIES TRAINING MINISTRY			
38	INCIDENTALS	\$150.00		\$3,607.38
39	Research future college	\$400.00		
40			\$550.00	\$3,607.38
41	CHURCH VISITS & PULPIT EXCHANGE			
42	TASMANIA	\$1,259.00		\$2,185.00
43	ALBANY/METRO 2 visits pa			
44			\$1,259.00	\$2,185.00
45	TREASURY ADMINISTRATION COSTS			
46		\$150.00	\$150.00	\$50.00
47	SYNOD ARCHIVES			\$50.00
48	INCIDENTALS (New Cabinet)	\$2,950.00	\$2,950.00	\$0.00
49				\$0.00
50	Classis costs North	\$15,000.00		\$15,000.00
51	Classis Costs South	\$5,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$5,000.00
52				\$20,000.00
53	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$87,925.00	\$67,950.81
54				
55	TREASURY OPERATING FUNDS		\$25,000.00	\$48,098.65
56	(Includes funds required for 2003 Synod)			
57	TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT		\$112,925.00	\$116,049.46

Appendix 10 - Supplementary Report of Deputies for Sister Church Relations : 2000 – 2003

1. RCN

Kampen Theological College

Find below a summary of the Kampen Theological Report to Synod Zuidhoorn and decisions by the Synod of the RCN

KAMPEN THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

The deputies for the “Theologische Universiteit” presented a very detailed report to their synod covering all aspects of the university in Kampen (in response to a request from Synod Leusden).

The request details Committees, Structures, Daily Operations, Goalsetting, Future Planning, Task and Place, Personnel, External Communication and Relationships, Public Relationships, Students, Library, Electronic/Computer/IT, Financial, Archives and more and provides a good picture of the Theological University and it's work.

A brief overview of important points or issues are:

1. The university is introducing a new training programme called the bachelor-masters structure. In a few years graduates will not be called doctorandus anymore but masters;
2. The university has focused on two goals;
 - a) Supply the churches with able leaders;
 - b) Participate and contribute to theological academia;
3. The university has as major concern the continual decline of student intake. It is therefore focussing on or increasing its public relations;
4. Stipulations set by the Civil Government in order to meet the criteria for recognition of university status has to be considered by synod; Questions as to whether the university should apply for subsidies (and thereby expose itself to Government meddling) and a report on how the subsidies can be spent has been left undecided till next synod;
5. the theological university is increasing or intensifying contact with the university of Apeldoorn of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

Synod made the following decisions concerning the Theological University.

Decision to appoint new deputies as Board of Governors with the mandate:

1. To agree with the management of the Board of Governors and discharge them;
2. To adopt the suggested formulation of the objectives of the university;
3. To take note of the rules concerning the legal status of all personnel and to establish a committee of appeal;
4. To charge new deputies to govern the university in agreement with the constitution and together with the Theological University of Apeldoorn (CGK) be responsible for the prerequisite courses in accordance of the constitution and pay attention to other possible ways of cooperation and apply the positive changes of the management structure as much as is possible within the present constitution;
5. To mandate the new deputies to make proposals to the next synod re the integration of the constitution and to consider the external organization of the management of the university and to provide an evaluation after the visitation of 2003 when the decision is made whether to conform with the demands made by the Government. Deputies are expected to create a scenario indicating what the churches are expected to need in the future concerning the training in the ministry;
6. To continue, for the time being, the operation of the Institute for the Financial Care of the Training for the Ministry in the GKN, housed in Groningen;
7. To determine the formation needs of the university for 2002-2005 and to declare that financial assistance to foreign churches and training is the task of the theological university. Deputies are also mandated to organize, together with the Finance and Management deputies, an external evaluation of the formation plan to facilitate the decision making process at the next synod;
8. To mandate deputies-governors to research the possibilities and consequences of subsidies as well as the conditions attached and the amounts involved; to ensure in the meantime that the churches receive adequate information as to the result of this

research and to serve the next synod with a well grounded proposal which includes the principal questions surrounding the receipt of governments subsidies;

9. To accept the 2003-2005 budget of the Theological University, based on the formation plan;
10. To accept the complete report of deputies-governors for inclusion in the acts, without the appendices, and mandate deputies to keep in close contact with the churches through publications, together with deputies General Synodical Publications, in order for the churches and the new students to be aware of issues at hand. The deputies are required to give clear information and guidance about the changes made at the theological university and the background of them, in the following period;
11. To create the possibility that at the theological university a special chair can be installed and for that reason establish the rules for special chairs at the theological university. The new deputies are mandated to propose how, in connection with the installation of the special chair, the rules may be changed.

2. FRCSA

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

A letter was received from the Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, see full copy below.

In its main report about FRCSA (under 4.2 Activities) your deputies reported about an earlier letter from FRCSA about the 1998 Synod's decision re Rev VanHulst. It also pointed to a letter which your deputies sent to explain the decision. Also, this matter was discussed in a face to face meeting. However, we just recently received a second letter about this concern of theirs (see the letter below). We must ask the synod to judge on what to do further. Our correspondence, which is available for synod, clearly favours what is mentioned in the main report, i.e. acknowledging certain weaknesses while maintaining the doctrinal stance taken and then allowing this matter to rest.

Deputate betrekkinge Buitelandse Kerke

Deputies for relations with Churches Abroad

Deputies for relations with Churches Abroad

Secretary:

Welma Wehmeyer

PO Box 31314

TOTIUSDAL 0134

e-mail address: welmaw@lantic.net

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

PO Box 191

Armadale

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Pretoria, 11 April 2003

Dear brothers in the Lord,

Thank you for your letter dated October 30, 2001. We apologise for our late reply. Even though we did discuss this matter with you delegate at our last Synod, br Bert Veenendaal, we wish to give you a written reply. For convenience sake we will follow the points you made.

1. Thank you for the clarification regarding the status of the committee 1 report. It remains a pity that that status is not explicitly spelled out in the synod acts. Now this matter remains open to confusion. We, for example, did not read into it that synod endorsed the details of the report, but that synod concluded on the basis of the general thrust of the report that Rev van Hulst's teachings are not in accordance with Scripture and Confession.
2. Regarding the content of the evaluation we referred to the comments of our previous deputies recorded in our Acts of Synod 2000. We understand that you did not yet have a copy of those Acts at the time. Hopefully after reading our Acts you understand better what we were referring to.
3. The lack of Scriptural refutation and substantiation was indeed our major concern. In such a weighty issue Scriptural evidence is most important. We need to convince each other on the basis of Scripture. The

Confessions also need to be read in the light of Scripture. It is a great pity that the pressure of time and the focus on the Subscription Form prevented the synod during its first session in June from giving a clear Scriptural testimony. The second session of synod thankfully acted differently and gave a solid Scriptural evaluation of Rev van Hulst's view on the Law.

4. We understand that the Consistory of Launceston had to make the weightier decision regarding the suspension and disposition of Rev van Hulst. However the decision of synod not to receive Rev van Hulst as member of Synod on the ground that his teachings deviates from Scripture and the Confessions is also a very weighty decision with a great impact. Note also that Synod did not just refer to his deviation from the Confessions, but also explicitly referred to his deviation from Scripture. It was ultimately Scripture that was at stake and that required a clear and irrefutable substantiation from Scripture. One must also remember that the decisions of synod are public and serve as a witness of the churches. That is why great care must be taken to present a strong Scriptural testimony, especially with regard to matters of doctrine.

Brothers, from the above it will be clear what our main problem is with the decision of the first session of Synod Launceston 1998. We see the lack of clear substantiation from Scripture as a serious defect and as a missed opportunity. Whether anything can still be done about it? This is for you to judge. We from our side have decided to let the matter rest. Quite some time has passed since those decisions were made. You have also had a synod after that event. We regret that we have taken such a long time to bring this matter to your attention.

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Welma Wehmeyer
Secretary

Appendix 11 - Rules For Synods Of The Free Reformed Churches Of Australia

as adopted by Synod 1998, Acts Article 65,
and amended in accordance with Art.42 Acts Synod 2000
and, resp., Art.12, 90, and 91 Acts Synod 2003

1. CONVENING CHURCH

Every synod shall appoint a church to convene the next synod.

The tasks of the convening church are:

1.1

Give at least six months written notice to all the churches and all synodical deputyships of synod's meeting place, commencement, date and time.

This notification shall further

- invite the churches to submit, by a date four months prior to the commencement of synod, any new items of business for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;
- invite the churches to submit by a date three weeks prior to the commencement of synod, any other material for inclusion on the Final Draft Agenda;
- invite the deputyships to submit their reports for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;
- state the postal address for receipt of submissions.

1.2

Receive all material submitted, clearly date mark each item, and place it on the Draft Agenda, listing the order of business as follows - or as near thereto as practicable:

1. Opening by the Convening Church
2. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of the Agenda
7. Adoption of Meeting Procedures
8. Incoming Correspondence
9. Instructions
10. Reports by Classes

11. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
12. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
13. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
14. Appointment of Deputies
15. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of the next Synod
16. Personal questions
17. Adoption of Acts
18. Approval of Press Release
19. Closing of Synod

1.3

After the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda, forward to each of the churches one unbound and unfolded copy of the document, in time to reach them at least three months before synod commences.

1.4

As soon as classes have appointed delegates to Synod, forward to each of the delegates and each of the alternates one unbound and unfolded copy of the Provisional Draft Agenda. As further material becomes available, forward one unbound and unfolded copy to each of the delegates and alternates.

1.5

After the closing date for the Final Draft Agenda, forward with minimum delay to each of the churches two bound copies of the Final Draft Agenda, together with one unbound copy of all material received after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda.

Confidential matters must be sent to delegates and alternates only.

1.6

Arrange meeting accommodation for synod and its committees; any necessary sound amplification; all administrative support facilities; and refreshments and meals. Also, recommend to Synod a qualified administrative assistant to the Clerk (see Rule 3.2).

1.7

Prepare and submit to synod a recommendation for the appointment of the next convening church. Here the convening church shall seek to improve the rotation between the different geographic areas in which the churches are located, provided however that over an extended period of time the churches shall still have equal turns in convening and hosting synod.

1.8

At the opening of synod, place on synod's table one bound copy of the Final Draft Agenda together with loose inserts of copies of all items received after its closing date, open synod in a christian manner; examine the credentials of the delegates and report its findings; conduct the election of synod's officers; hand over control to the elected chairman; and inform him on what other arrangements have been made for the conduct of synod.

Note: In the case of an extra-ordinary synod, the times and conditions specified in this section shall, to the extent that it is practical to do so, be observed.

2. DELEGATES

In choosing delegates for synod, the minor assemblies shall observe the following rules:

- An elder may be appointed if no minister is available; and a deacon may be appointed if no elder is available.
- Every classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. These delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as possible.

3. OFFICERS OF SYNOD

3.1

Synod shall elect a chairman, a vice-chairman, a first clerk, and a second clerk; who collectively shall be known as the officers of synod.

3.2

The vice-chairman shall assist the other officers of synod where needed and shall prepare the Press Release of synod.

The first clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod, He shall have responsibility for Synod's administration facilities, and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates. An assistant recommended by the convening church (see Rules 1.6) shall be appointed to record the Acts of Synod during the open sessions. At the conclusion of Synod he shall be responsible for printing and distributing these Acts.

The second clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall place a copy of all such correspondence in synod's archives.

3.3

Every synod shall decide whether its chairman and first clerk will be appointed to an advisory committee.

3.4

The officers of synod shall prepare and submit written proposals on:

- the number and composition of advisory committees, subject to the provisions of Rule 4 of the *Rules for Synods*; the nominations for committee chairman, and the agenda items to be dealt with by each committee;
- the attendance and participation of any adviser or visitor, subject to the provisions of Rules 5 and 6 of the *Rules for Synods*;
- the time schedules for meeting;
- the order in which the agenda items shall be dealt with;
- nominations for deputies appointments.

4. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

4.1

A committee shall have from three to five members, and be chaired by the person appointed by synod.

4.2

Unless it has good grounds to believe that a matter can be finalised by a straightforward recommendation, a committee shall submit a written report for consideration by synod. In the case of a substantial matter a committee may first distribute to synod's delegates a provisional report with draft conclusions and recommendations, with the request for written comments by a certain date and time, and thereafter submit a final report to synod.

5. ADVISERS

5.1

Synod may resolve to admit for the purpose of giving advice, to a full session or advisory committee, any minister from the bond of churches who has not been delegated to synod, as well as any communicant member from the bond of churches with particular skills or expertise required by synod.

5.2

Appendix 11 – Rules for Synods

An adviser shall confine his activities in the meeting to giving advice only at the request from the chairman. He shall vacate his place in the meeting after having concluded his advice, and the meeting shall not commence debate until the adviser has done so.

6. VISITORS

Synod shall recognise visitors from other churches, and grant privileges accordingly, as follows:

6.1

Delegates from sister churches will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the particular sister relation; and sit as advisory members in synod's open sessions and advisory committees where they may give advice when they request, or are requested to do so.

6.2

Delegates from churches with whom we have temporary ecclesiastical contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the temporary ecclesiastical contact; to speak in synod's open session when they request, or are requested to do so, on matters specifically pertaining to the temporary ecclesiastical contact; and to sit as advisory members in the advisory committee(s) that deal with the temporary ecclesiastical contact, where they may give advice when they request, or are requested to do so.

6.3

Delegates from churches with whom we have official contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the contact.

6.4

Delegates from churches who desire to establish contact with our churches will be allowed admission to the audience of synod.

All delegates so received will be offered normal Christian hospitality, such as lodging and meals.

7. GENERAL PROCEDURES

7.1

After synod has been constituted the chairman shall request the delegates and any advisers then present to rise; and by that action those rising shall be held to reaffirm their agreement with the Word of God and the Confessions. This reaffirmation shall also be required from any person attending for the first time as substitute for another delegate.

7.2

In adopting its Agenda, synod shall examine the status of each item that was not included in the Provisional Draft Agenda; and any such item that is found to contain new matter(s) - this being an item that should have been in the hands of the churches three months prior to the commencement of synod - shall not be taken into consideration by synod.

Synod shall not add any item to the Final Draft Agenda except by special resolution and then only on the grounds of exceptional circumstances.

The Final Draft Agenda as adopted shall become synod's Agenda, to which nothing shall be added.

7.3

The admissibility of an agenda item shall be decided at the time when the item is scheduled for consideration. Submissions not from the churches, except those allowed by the Church Order, shall be received for information only and require no acknowledgment.

7.4

Members of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, or of any of its sister churches, shall have the right of admission to the audience of all open sessions.

7.5

The daily closing of synod with prayer shall be by synod's members in alphabetical order of surnames.

7.6

Other than in matters of personal nature, or when otherwise decided by special resolution, synod shall not meet in closed session. Admission to a closed session shall normally be restricted to synod members.

7.7

Synod members shall have free access to any advisory committee's meeting but

Appendix 11 – Rules for Synods

not speak except at the invitation of the chairman, and then only in an advisory capacity.

7.8

The Acts of the proceedings of each day shall if possible be presented for adoption at the beginning of the following sitting day.

They shall record all matters of substance under the headings MATERIAL (and ADMISSIBILITY, if applicable), DECISION(S) and GROUNDS.

Proposals declared in the affirmative shall be recorded as ADOPTED.

Proposals declared in the negative shall be recorded as DEFEATED.

They shall not record any details of the vote or ballot, nor any names of the movers and seconders of proposals, motions and amendments.

8. RULES FOR DEBATE

8.1

Any discussion relating to the introduction of a proposal or motion shall be kept to a minimum and be restricted to procedure and matter-of-fact issues. It shall not include argumentation in support of, or in opposition to, the substance of a proposal or motion except in the wording or the framing thereof.

8.2

No proposal, motion or amendment shall be debated, put to the vote or adopted unless it has been seconded; provided however that the chairman, upon a proposal or motion being moved, may ask the meeting if any delegate opposes it. If no delegate registers opposition the chairman may declare the proposal or motion carried without debate and without taking a vote.

8.3

A delegate wishing to submit an original proposal, motion or amendment shall, if required by the chairman, put the proposal, motion or amendment in writing.

8.4

Synod may decide to conduct debate on a particular matter in more than one round. In this situation the provisions of these Rules shall apply to each round, provided however that

- in the first round a speaker shall not interact with earlier speakers in \that round;
- in the second and following rounds a speaker shall not repeat what he said in earlier rounds;

- in the final round no new matters shall be brought up.

8.5

No speaker shall speak more than once in each round of the debate on the same question, except by way of explanation, or in reply upon any original proposal or motion of which he was the mover, or in reply as the mover of any amendment then before the chair.

8.6

A speaker shall at all times address the chairman.

8.7

Any delegate may, by way of raising a point of order, direct the attention of the chairman to any infraction of the Rules for Debate.

8.8

A speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, in which event he shall refrain from speaking until the point of order has been heard and decided.

8.9

A delegate who was the mover of a proposal, motion or amendment shall, at the conclusion of the speeches of all the other delegates who chose to speak on the matter, have the right of reply. A delegate speaking in reply shall not introduce any new matter but shall strictly confine himself to answering previous speakers.

8.10

The following motion may be received when a proposal (or motion) is being debated: "That the proposal (or motion) be amended". In this situation attention must be given to the following points:

1. Every amendment shall be relevant to the proposal or motion on which it is moved, and must substantially support the nature and intent of that proposal or motion.
2. Only one amendment shall be discussed at a time. As often as an amendment is defeated, another amendment may be moved before the original motion is put to the vote.
3. In speaking to an amendment a speaker may give notice of his intention to move a further amendment.
4. Where an amendment is adopted, the original motion as amended shall for all purposes of subsequent debate be treated as an original motion.

9. VOTING

9.1

When to vote

Wherever possible, decisions shall be made unanimously; and on matters of principle the chairman shall call for a vote only after every reasonable effort to obtain a consensus has been made.

9.2

How to vote

In taking the vote on any proposal, motion or amendment, the chairman shall ask those in favour to indicate such by show of hands; and he may do so as often as is necessary to enable him to form and declare his opinion as to whether the affirmative or negative has the majority.

9.3

Declaring the result of a Vote

A motion or proposal shall be declared 'adopted' by simple majority vote. If the number of votes in favour is equal to the number of votes against, the proposal or motion shall be declared 'defeated'.

9.4

Voting on persons

Questions concerning persons, except on appointments proposed by the officers with the prior consent of synod, shall be decided by secret ballot.

9.5

Counting Rules

- Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and ballot papers left blank shall be declared invalid.
- Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be declared elected, provided that this number is not less than one-half of the number of valid votes cast.
- If there is no result after two free ballots, any subsequent choice shall be restricted to the candidates who received the most votes in the previous ballot. If a ballot results in a tied vote another ballot shall be conducted, and if this results in a further tied vote the decision shall be made by lot after calling upon the Name of the LORD.

10. DEPUTIES

Synod shall appoint its deputies in closed session, and provide them with clearly defined written instructions, to which deputies shall strictly adhere. Deputies shall submit a written report on their activities. Unless otherwise instructed, they shall submit their report in time for inclusion in the Provisional Draft Agenda.

If a supplementary report is found necessary, it shall present only relevant information that has come to notice after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda.

Deputies shall be reimbursed all costs incurred in the execution of their task. They shall present details of their expenditure to synod for auditing prior to being discharged.

Deputies must make available at synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit the same to the archivist.

11. TREASURER and FINANCE

11.1

The synod treasurer shall:

- prepare financial estimates and inform the churches of their share of synod costs;
- collect and bank the monies received from the churches;
- invest any temporary surplus funds in an authorised trustee investment or banking institution;
- pay all properly authorised and documented synod expenditure;
- keep books of account, setting out accurately all disbursements and balances of funds held;
- submit his books of account to the authorised deputies of synod for scrutiny or audit.

11.2

The convening church, the various deputyships, synod's delegates and whoever else may have incurred authorised synod expenditure shall present properly itemised and documented accounts to the treasurer for payment.

11.3

The members of a deputyship shall, if at all possible, submit a joint statement of expenditure.

Appendix 11 – Rules for Synods

11.4

The share of each church in synod costs shall be in proportion to the number of its confessing members as at the first day of January of the year in which synod is held.

11.5

Upon receipt and adoption of a satisfactory audit report, synod shall discharge the treasurer.

12. RULES FOR SYNODS

- These *Rules for Synods* are the rules by which the synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are conducted. They shall not be changed except by adoption in synod of a proposal submitted by one of the churches.
- If any provision in these *Rules for Synods* is found to be in conflict with the Church Order, the latter shall prevail.

Appendix 11b - Model For Committee Proposals

TITLE

Committee presents:

MATERIAL

Agenda Item(s)

ADMISSIBILITY

1.

a.

1.

2.

OBSERVATION(S)

1.

2.

a.

b.

3.

4.

CONSIDERATION(S)

1.

2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.

2.

Appendix 12 – Church Order of The Free Reformed Churches Of Australia

As revised by Synod Rockingham 2003

INTRODUCTION

ARTICLE 1 - Purpose and Division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary to have:

- I - offices and supervision of doctrine;
- II - assemblies;
- III - worship, sacraments and ceremonies, and
- IV - discipline.

I. OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

ARTICLE 3 - The calling to office

A. ALL OFFICE-BEARERS

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto.

The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the local regulations adopted for that purpose.

Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. ELDERS AND DEACONS

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices.

The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. From this number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons.

If necessary the consistory with the deacons may present to the congregation the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

C. MINISTERS

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. ELIGIBILITY

Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- (1) have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or
- (2) are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or
- (3) have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship. The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

- (1) have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the necessary documents to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or
- (2) have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or
- (3) have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call.
Classis shall approve the call
 - a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, attested by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and
 - b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This classis examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.
2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.

Appendix 12 – Church Order

1. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only in case he remains within the same classis.
 2. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.
- C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

ARTICLE 7 - From one church to another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of his consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry, classis shall (with synod's prior approval) examine him, and upon a favourable outcome allow him, as candidate, to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, observing the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have recently joined the church

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by the classis in whose area he lives. This classis examination shall be conducted with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory, with the deacons, on behalf of the congregation that it represents in this matter, shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call or an appointment to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be appointed for the training of students for the ministry, others may be called for mission work.

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word, by reason of age, sickness or other wise, is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church that he served last, and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of his consistory to relieve him of his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 17 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so

that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide properly for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

ARTICLE 18 - Students of theology

The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

ARTICLE 19 - Task of missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

ARTICLE 20 - Task of elders

The elders shall together with the ministers of the Word govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the upbuilding of the congregation they shall make homevisits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need; and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and after mutual consultation distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall give account of their policies and management to the consistory.

ARTICLE 22 - Equality of respective duties

In the local congregation equality shall be maintained among the ministers, among the elders, and among the deacons, regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

All ministers of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose. Anyone being in office who refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation its obligation to be obedient and show respect to the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

II. ASSEMBLIES

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in

Appendix 12 – Church Order

common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are directly involved.

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

ARTICLE 34 Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and ensure that every one observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis.

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and be chaired by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall chair in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these

circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Classes shall be held at least once every three months. The ministers shall be chairman in rotation, or one shall be chosen to be chairman; however the same minister shall not be chairman twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every classis shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

If two or more ministers are serving the same church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.

ARTICLE 44 - Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties

of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to classis.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders.

At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of a classis. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod.

ARTICLE 46 - Relationship with other churches

The relationship with other churches shall be regulated by synod. With churches of Reformed confession sister relations shall be maintained as much as possible. On non-essential points of ecclesiastical practice other churches shall not be rejected.

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all matters provided for in the Church Order. A classis may request these deputies to assist in cases of special difficulties. Each synod shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed as much as possible for separate matters. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report.

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

ARTICLE 50 - Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall make sure that the parents honour their vows to instruct their children, to the utmost of their power, in the doctrine of the Scriptures as summarised in the confessions, and to have them instructed in the same by the instruction provided by the consistory.

In accordance with the same vow, the consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, and with the cooperation of the communion of saints, give their children education (as stipulated by the civil government) which is based on Scripture and Confession.

ARTICLE 54 - Public profession of faith

Those who desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of the doctrine of God's Word. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister churches shall be admitted on the basis of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain Church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

Communicant members who move to another congregation shall be given, following appropriate announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two authorised office-bearers. This attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

ARTICLE 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members

An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.

ARTICLE 61 Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 68 - Funerals

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

IV. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to His honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence, the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or the sin committed is of a public character.

ARTICLE 72 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless the member concerned has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the

consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the re-admission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the re-admission shall take place, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he can not continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly: False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod

Appendix 13 - The Guidelines for Support of Other Churches

As amended by Synod Rockingham 2003 Art 86

There shall be good consultation and as much cooperation as possible with churches in our own bond and sister churches who offer support to the same churches. Such consultation and cooperation should also extend to aid organisations (from within our churches/sister churches) who offer support to these churches. Care should be taken not to duplicate support that may already be given by other organizations.

Each request for support must as much as possible be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent as much as possible via these deputies. Our deputies are responsible for proper distribution of funds.

Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.

Each request for support should be well documented and include

- What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
- What purpose the project has;
- What length of time it will take;
- And the expected goal of the project.

Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles

- Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;
- Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;
- Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;
- Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;
- Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;
- Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;
- Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported,.
- Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;
- And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given.

Appendix 13 – Guidelines for Deputy Support in Indonesia

The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.

The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.

The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.

Appendix 14 - Synod Budget 2003 to 2006

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY
Budget 2003 to 2006

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA SYNOD TREASURY COST SHARING FOR 2003/2006						
ITEM CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED FROM THE CHURCHES						
1		COMMUN'T	PERCENTAGE	2003	2004	2005
2		MBRS 2003		SHARE	SHARE	SHARE
3	FRC ALBANY	236	13.27	\$2,543.67	\$2,543.67	\$2,543.67
4	FRC ARMADALE	301	16.93	\$3,244.26	\$3,244.26	\$3,244.26
5	FRC BUNBURY	35	1.97	\$377.24	\$377.24	\$377.24
6	FRC BYFORD	204	11.47	\$2,198.77	\$2,198.77	\$2,198.77
7	FRC KELMSCOTT	144	8.10	\$1,552.07	\$1,552.07	\$1,552.07
8	FRC LAUNCESTON	103	5.79	\$1,110.16	\$1,110.16	\$1,110.16
9	FRC LEGANA	57	3.21	\$614.36	\$614.36	\$614.36
10	FRC MT NASURA	205	11.53	\$2,209.55	\$2,209.55	\$2,209.55
11	FRC ROCKINGHAM	153	8.61	\$1,649.08	\$1,649.08	\$1,649.08
12	FRC WEST ALBANY	169	9.51	\$1,821.53	\$1,821.53	\$1,821.53
13	FRC WEST KELMSCOTT	171	9.62	\$1,843.09	\$1,843.09	\$1,843.09
14	TOTALS	1778	100	\$19,163.78	\$19,163.78	\$19,163.78
15	Cost per confessing member per annum			\$10.78	\$10.78	\$10.78
16						
17	OTHER INCOME					
18	REFUNDS			\$2,500.00		
19	INTEREST			\$2,000.00		
20	TREASURY BALANCE AT 4 March 2003			\$48,098.65		
21						
22	SUB-TOTAL OTHER INCOME			\$52,598.65		\$52,598.65
23						
24	TOTAL INCOME REQUIRED					\$110,090.00

Appendix 14 - Synod Budget 2003/2006

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA SYNOD TREASURY BUDGET FOR 2003/2006				
ITEM	EXPENDITURE	ACTUAL 2000/2003	BUDGET 2003/2006	
1	SYNOD COSTS			
2	TYPIST		\$1,100.00	
3	FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT HIRE		\$1,100.00	
4	STATIONERY AND CONSUMABLES		\$2,000.00	
5	CATERING		\$1,500.00	
6	POSTAGE AND TELEPHONE		\$400.00	
7	PRESENTATIONS		\$250.00	
8	MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE		\$800.00	
9	LOSS OF INCOME DELEGATES SYNOD 2003		\$14,000.00	
10	TRAVEL COSTS TO SYNOD 2003		\$6,000.00	
11	TRAVEL COSTS CLASSIS		n/a	
12	PRINTING ACTS OF SYNOD 2003		\$6,000.00	
13	PRINTING REPORTS TO SYNOD 2003		\$1,500.00	
14				\$34,650.00
15				
16	DEPUTIES BOOK OF PRAISE		\$200.00	\$200.00
17				
18	DEPUTIES REVISE CHURCH ORDER		\$200.00	\$200.00
19				
20	DEPUTIES CONTACT OTHER CHURCHES			
21	BOOKS ETC		\$200.00	
22	TRAVEL COSTS PERTH / ALBANY		\$1,440.00	
23	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2004		\$2,000.00	
24	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS INDONESIA 2005		\$4,000.00	
25	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS RCNZ 2004		\$3,000.00	
26	TRAVEL COSTS OVERSEAS RCNZ 2006		\$3,000.00	
27	TRAVEL COSTS PCEA		\$2,500.00	
28	TRAVEL COSTS CANADA 2005		\$3,000.00	
29	TRAVEL COST PC KOREA		\$2,500.00	
30	TRAVEL COSTS SOUTH AFRICA 2006		\$2,500.00	
31	TRAVEL COSTS NETHERLANDS		\$4,000.00	
32	TRAVEL COSTS PHILIPPINES		\$3,000.00	
33	UNA SANCTA SUBSCRIPTIONS		\$500.00	
34	FRCA WEB SITE		\$600.00	
35	INCIDENTALS (postage, telephone, typing, printing etc)		\$300.00	
36				\$32,540.00
37				
38	DEPUTIES TRAINING MINISTRY		\$200.00	
39	Guest speaker 2003		\$5,500.00	
40	Travel board meetings		\$3,000.00	
41				\$8,700.00
42	CHURCH VISITS AND PULPIT EXCHANGE			
43	Travel costs		n/a	
44				
45	TREASURY ADMINISTRATION COSTS		\$200.00	\$200.00
46				
47	SYNOD ARCHIVES			
48	INCIDENTALS (New Cabinet)		\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
49				
50	CLASSIS COSTS		n/a	
51				
52	TOTAL EXPENDITURE			\$80,090.00
53				
54	TREASURY OPERATING FUNDS			\$30,000.00
55	(Includes funds required for 2006 Synod)			
56	TOTAL BUDGET AMOUNT			\$110,090.00

Appendix
ACTS OF THE 2003 SYNOD
2nd Session

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA

Rockingham, Western Australia
13 – 16 October 2003

Appendix 15 Advice Received for Second Session of Synod

Advice Requested – Rev WWJ Van Oene – Rules of Classis

Dear Rev van Oene:

Our Synod has to deal with a quite a number of appeals from Classis North, and more specifically, revolving around the Church of Kelmscott. In order to deal with the appeals thoroughly, Synod formed an advisory committee of four persons to work through the appeals.

A couple of appeals are against the Rules of Classis North, and more specifically, with the appeal procedure adopted by that Classis. Have a read of the rules.

Article 6 Procedures

6. 1 Appeals

- 6.1.1. *Appeals must be submitted to the Convening Church four (4) weeks prior to Classis. Sufficient copies must be supplied for distribution to Classis delegates, plus one copy for Classis Archives.*
- 6.1.2. *Appeals against consistory decisions should proceed as follows:*
 - 6.1.2.1. *A copy of the letter of appeal and any accompanying documentation must be given by appellants to a) all parties involved or implicated in the appeal, and b) the Convening Church at least eight (8) weeks prior to Classis.*
 - 6.1.2.2. *The consistory involved may submit a written response to Classis provided no new matters are [sic] es as well.*
 - 6.1.2.3. *Any further reactions are to be sent to all the parties involved.*
 - 6.1.2.4. *The appellant should ensure that all material should be received by the convening church four weeks prior to the commencement of classis.*
 - 6.1.2.5. *In dealing with an appeal Classis should consider only the written material that was prepared and submitted in compliance with these Regulations. Classis may seek clarification from either party if it so decides..*

First of all, we have to deal with the question of admissibility. The appellants have not discussed their concerns about these Rules of Classis with their consistory, with the result that the Classis has not been asked to review these rules. The appellants have brought their appeal concerning these rules directly to Synod. Is this proper? We as committee think it would have made more

sense to approach it via their consistory, and so have Classis review these regulations. On the other hand, we realise that they are appealing a decision of a minor assembly to the major assembly. So the question: are these appeals regarding Classis Rules admissible?

If they are, perhaps you could give further advice about the following proposal that the advisory committee has drafted.

Appeal 1 re: Classis North Regulations:

Br and sr. X appeal the regulations of Classis North for appeals and allege that the appeal procedure is unfair and denies equal representation. They ask Synod to review these decisions of Classis North and judge them with Scriptural and just consideration, so that:

- 1. the time for lodging an appeal not be shortened a month.*
- 2. the appeal comes to classis without extra input from the consistory*
- 3. the appellants can be present to answer queries in the same way as consistory.*
- 4. the copying of the appeal be the expense of the churches*

Decision:

- 1. Synod observes that Classis North requires appellants to submit appeals and documentation 8 weeks prior to Classis. This seems rather excessive. However the minor assembly may establish deadlines for submissions that allow delegates to Classis to be properly prepared to deal with the material presented.*
- 2. Synod observes that the rules of appeal adopted by Classis North are convoluted in comparison with the simplicity of Article 31 of the Church Order. Furthermore, the church order states that only matters that cannot be completed in the minor assembly are to be dealt with at the major assembly. Thus an appeal to Classis should only be sent once the matter has been fully dealt with at the consistory level. Under the appeal regulations of Classis North (Art 6.1.2.3), it appears that the appellant may continue to interact with the consistory and vice versa after the matter has been appealed to the Classis. In this way there is also interaction regarding the appeal before Classis is convened.*
- 3. It is up to Classis to decide whether and from whom it seeks clarification when dealing with appeals, providing that it deals with the appeal justly and without partiality. Synod sees wisdom if Classis allows both parties in an appeal to clarify their position.*
- 4. Article 31 of CO stipulates only that an appellant must lodge an appeal with the major assembly. In former times one copy of the appeal was sufficient. It is only a matter of recent history that there is an ability to reproduce multiple copies of an appeal. If for the benefit of its delegates Classis decides to give copies of the appeals, the cost should be borne by the Classis. Nevertheless, the classis has the right to establish and amend its own regulations. The complainant is able to raise this matter with his consistory and to recommend the revision of these rules.*

Appeal 2: re: Classis North Regulations

Br. X appeals to Classis concerning the regulations of Classis North, and requests Synod to:

- 1) *To advise Classis North to scrutinise their adopted regulations (below) and to bring them into line with the Australian situation and decisions previously made by our synods.*
 - a. *Art 7.7–“Financial aid shall be restricted to theological students of the Canadian Reformed Churches enrolled or are planning to enrol at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches”*
 - b. *Art 2.3–“...A Classis shall ... meet in closed session...when it has to investigate the ...doctrine of persons”*
 - c. *Art 3.1–“[It is the duty of the convening church] (8) weeks prior to the date of Classis to ask the churches a) to submit matters for the agenda at least six weeks prior to the date of the classis; b) to inform, if possible, the convening church in advance that they intend to ask the classis for advice according to Art 41 C.O...”*
 - d. *Art 6.1.2.1–“A copy of the letter of appeal and any accompanying documentation must be given by appellants to a) all parties involved or implicated in the appeal, and b) the convening church”*
 - e. *Art 6.1.2.5–“In dealing with an appeal Classis should consider only the written material that was prepared and submitted in compliance with these Regulations. Classis may seek clarification from either party if it so decides”*
- 2) *To declare that Classis North in its adopted regulations is wrong when it stipulates in Article 6 of its Regulations the way of appeal and opens in Article 6.1.2.2 the possibility for the consistory involved to submit a written response to the appeal to Classis.*

Decision:

Re: 1

- a) *That financial aid is restricted to theological students of Canadian Reformed churches, and that the accepted theological training facility is restricted to the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches make it evident that a simple error has occurred in the adoption of these rules from Canada. They should be (if they have not already been) corrected in line with the guidelines adopted by the FRCA Synods.*
- b) *The examination of a person’s doctrine and conduct is rightly a matter of closed session.*
- c) *That appellants must submit appeals and documentation 8 weeks prior to Classis would seem rather excessive. However the minor assembly may establish deadlines for submissions that allow delegates to Classis to be properly prepared to deal with the material presented.*

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- d) *The rules of Classis North still allow for churches to ask for advice in accordance with Art 41 CO.*
- e) *It is up to Classis to decide whether and from whom it seeks clarification when dealing with appeals, providing that it deals with the appeal justly and without partiality. Synod sees wisdom if Classis allows both parties in an appeal to clarify their position if necessary.*
 - Re: 2
- a) *Synod observes that the rules of appeal adopted by Classis North are convoluted in comparison with the simplicity of Article 31 of the Church Order, and makes it difficult for the average church member to appeal.*
- b) *The church order states that only matters that cannot be completed in the minor assembly are to be dealt with at the major assembly. Thus an appeal to Classis should only be sent once the matter has been fully dealt with at the consistory level. Under the appeal regulations of Classis North (Art 6.1.2.3), the appellant may continue to interact with the consistory and vice versa after the matter has been appealed to the Classis. In this way there is also interaction regarding the appeal before Classis is convened.*

There is one other matter for which we ask your advice. When Synod reconvenes in October to deal with these matters, we will have to decide who is permitted to speak and vote on the appeals. It stands to reason that those who are directly implicated in the appeals may not vote. Thus Rev Bouwman would not vote on those appeals against himself, or delegates who belong to the consistory of Kelmscott may not vote on appeals against consistory. But here we see a problem. Can the delegates who belong to Classis North and who were involved in the appeals in the minor assembly speak and vote on the appeals lodged against the decisions of Classis North? In answering, we would ask you to consider that some of the appeals have to deal with the Rules of Classis North, some with doctrine of our forgiveness of others who sin against us, while some are more personal (against statements made, etc.).

On behalf of the advisory committee:

Advice Received – Rev WWJ Van Oene – Classical Rules

From: Rev WWJ VanOene

Sent: Wednesday, 23 July 2003 11:30 AM

Subject: Advice

Good morning

(Preamble deleted)

Two possibilities:

1. The brother and sister "just" "appeal" the classical rules.
Inadmissible. Art. 31 C.O. says that if someone complains he has been **wronged**. Not : if one disagrees, or if one thinks it better to do thing differently.
2. They have been wronged indeed, because a legitimate appeal by them against a consistory decision was maltreated on the ground of the adopted rules. Admissible in that case.
In this case it is not proper to approach the consistory first, for they were wronged (or were convinced that they were wronged) by a classical decision.

Now about those rules.

I am an opponent to all sorts of rules. In the long run one gets a *codex iuris canonici* which only experts can decipher. My advice would be : throw the whole set of rules into the Indian Ocean. One can do the greatest injustice by setting up all sorts of rules and then, seemingly completely legitimately, wipe appeals off the table

I reason as follows: One appeals **to the broader assembly**, not to the persons who have been delegated to that assembly and may never come there, because they are prevented legitimately and thus have to advise their alternate. This broader assembly is not there unless it has been constituted. And so I am convinced that one can come with an appeal just before the constitution of the assembly to which one appeals. I therefore personally reject the stipulation that an appeal has to be sent not just four weeks but even one day before the assembly is held. One can give an appeal along with a brother who has been delegated, to present it before the adoption of the agenda.

This is completely different from proposals submitted by the churches, about which the local consistories should be able to form an opinion, so that their delegates to the broader assembly know what lives in their consistory.

Who are "all parties involved" in an appeal ? One can appeal only a consistory **decision** to the next classis. So, the only "parties" involved are the consistory and the person himself. What is the nonsense of "all parties involved or implicated" ????

One might inform the convening church that an appeal is forthcoming, but that's all.

And then eight weeks in advance ? What if a consistory takes a decision which one feels obligated to appeal on the ground of Art. 31 just a few days before a classis is scheduled to be held ? Then the next classis can,

technically, reject the appeal on the ground that he should have appealed to the first broader assembly after the appealed decision was taken.....Brrrr!!

An appeal can be submitted only against a **decision**. Thus : the decision should be mentioned with the grounds for it; then the appeal should contain the grounds on which the decision must be "condemned." Thus it is not necessary at all that the appellant appears at the broader assembly to elucidate on his appeal, most likely bringing in all sorts of new elements that cannot be verified.

It is not more than common courtesy and brotherly love when the consistory receives a copy of the appeal beforehand. But this is none of a classis's business.

Thus far my remarks about the rules which sound more like a legal handbook than an ecclesiastical document.

Now some remarks about the proposal of the Advisory Committee.

Ad 2. An appeal does not have to come to classis accompanied by extra input from the consistory. If the consistory -- as it proper -- has received a copy, the brothers who were delegated can respond to questions. But remember : an appeal should contain the decision plus the grounds, plus why the grounds, and therefore the decision have (has) wronged the appellant(s)..

Ad 3. Only in very rare and exceptional cases should an appellant be allowed to appear and be involved in the discussion. This is totally different when someone has a "case" with "his" consistory.

Ad 4. There is no reason at all why the churches should be burdened with paying for the multiplication of appeals. When one is convinced that he has been so wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he should also have the guts to finance multiplication, so that his "case" can be dealt with properly. Imagine that someone has an appeal with 200 pages of attachments. This is not imaginary!

Continuing.

Ad 1. You know now what I think about deadlines.

Ad 2. Once there is a consistory decision, the member has the right to appeal. One does not have to go back and back to the consistory. Whether a member "interacts" with the consistory during or after an appeal has been dealt with, is no business of the broader assembly. A major assembly decides whether he "may" ????????

Ad 3. When there is a decision with grounds and an appeal against it with grounds, there is no need to seek further clarification, although, abstractly speaking, a broader assembly has the right to ask for it.

Ad 4. Art. 31 does not say that an appellant "must" lodge. He is **allowed** to. The cost of multiplication should be borne by the appellant. If he deems the matter so important, that he has been wronged and must appeal, he should see to it that it can be dealt with properly. It is his duty to look after that. No one has the right to tie the churches before his financial cart.

Appeal 2.

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How is brother X wronged by those regulations? If he has not been wronged by rejection of a legitimate appeal by him, he doesn't have a leg to stand on when "appealing" classical regulations. Dismissed.

Asking advice can be decided right before a classis is convened. What is the sense of telling so many weeks in advance that a consistory will ask advice? The matter is revealed at classis only. So, what's the sense? There is none.

A party involved in an appeal can only be the consistory and the person who appeals. Nonsensical provision.

Makes no sense to decide that classis shall consider only the written material. Decision with grounds, and then why grounds and decision are wrong. I am repeating myself.

Decision ad c. Delegates do not have to be prepared in advance for appeals. One appeals to the broader assembly, which isn't there until it has been constituted. (Repetition)

ad 2b. A matter has been "finalised" once a consistory has made a decision. One cannot compel a member to drag on and on and on. You don't have to stipulate that the appellant "may = is allowed" to continue discussions with the consistory.

Re: voting.

Only persons who are or were involved in the matter itself are not allowed to take part in the voting. They also should try, as much as they can restrain themselves, to abstain from taking part in the discussion. The documents should speak for themselves: decision with grounds, etc. But here I repeat again.

Whether one has dealt with the matter at the classical level is a different thing. He is a member now of the broadest assembly, it is possible that he changes his mind having heard the discussion at that broadest assembly. Having dealt with it before is not "being involved in the matter." It is up to him when he feels he should abstain, but he cannot be compelled to do so.

There may be typing mistakes in the above, for I don't have the time right now to check it, otherwise I'll have to wait till tomorrow again, and who knows what will show up then.

It is my sincere wish to have been of some assistance to you by writing these things. If there are other aspects or if you disagree, don't hesitate to write again. Much strength and wisdom.

The Lord bless you all.

Greetings.

Yours

VO

Advice Received – Dr M te Velde – re reporting sexual abuse.

2. Your second point contains various questions. You indeed also have some awkward items here. In the 1990's we had a workgroup of theologians and lawyers which drew up an appeals-regulation ('appel-regeling' can mean reporting or appealing to the authorities) for the churches. In the meantime, many classes have adopted this regulation. The general synod also adopted it; you can find it on www.Kerkrecht.nl. Various points of a procedural nature are regulated there. Perhaps they can be of benefit to you also.

Concerning the reporting to the authorities, much depends on what counts as a civil right in a certain country. I cannot judge that therefore. But something can be said about the relation between church and civil procedures. I commented about that in my previous email and hope that Douma and Gootjes will add their views.

I just want to remind you again what art. 71 of the original Church Order of Dordt says about the relation between civil and ecclesiastical hearings. Church discipline is not punishment in the sense of penance inflicted on a person, a payment which should be in proportion to the crime! Although the same facts are dealt with in both the ecclesiastical and civil procedures, the manner of dealing with it and the purpose differ.

Crime deserves punishment. If a victim, for various reasons, does not want to report the crime to the police and is satisfied with the personal reconciliation with the perpetrator, that can be acceptable, provided there are no civil obligations to report the crime. But if the victim chooses to lodge a criminal report, this cannot be judged to be a wrong action. Neither (is it wrong) if there has been a confession of guilt, and even if a mutual reconciliation had taken place. For the Christian reconciliation focuses on a different matter than the civil process. Crime needs to be punished, apart from the fact whether or not guilt was confessed or reconciliation with the victim took place. Be careful not to confuse both 'spheres', as it is said in the theological world.

I further add to this that it is a good thing to report because it

- a) helps other victims to find their way;
- b) helps to put an end to (sometimes) still existing abuse and to prevent recidivist behaviour (where one relapses into the same crime);
- c) the inflicted punishment truly helps to correct the offender;
- d) opportunities are created to enforce therapy;
- e) opportunities to compensate, to an extent, the suffered damage;
- f) through the public sentencing victims are helped, by learning to come to terms with the wrongs they have suffered (and for which they still always feel partly guilty). They feel supported, if the deeds are also denounced publicly and a punishment is inflicted for it.

For the rest, the distinctive character of each of the sphere of authority is usually seen more clearly in the case of other crimes. In a case of sexual abuse

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therefore, it is good to compare it continually with what would happen, if it was serious physical abuse or armed hold-up or fraudulent theft. One must remember that civil punishment is not only meted out because of what the offender has done to a specific victim, but also because of the fact that he thereby proved to be a danger to society and violated the accepted rules of that society.

It is possible, of course, that the perpetrator reports himself to the police. But it is not correct to see this as the only (good) possibility.

3. Then there is still the question about someone other than the victims being the appellant. Your wording is not quite clear to me. According to my grasp of the English language, 'on behalf of' can mean two things: a) in the name of; b) in aid of (in behalf of). Hence my two reactions below.

Can anyone appeal **in the name of** another church member (victim)? Yes, someone under guardianship, e.g. a mentally handicapped person. Then the court has appointed a legal representative who is authorised to appear on behalf of the handicapped person. It is also possible (to appeal in the name of another church member) when someone has been authorised by a church member to present his/her case, but the appeal then concerns that aforesaid member who is supported by another and whereby the other functions as his 'mouth'. In cases of sexual abuse, namely, the appeal process nearly always imposes such a psychological burden on the victim that her case to a large extent has to be presented via the help of another. That is permitted in the church. See the literature.

Can anyone (without being authorised) also appeal **in aid (support) of** another church member? This question cannot be answered simply by referring to this or that synod decision or to a commentary on the Church Order.

The starting-point is that when injustice has been done in the congregation, the appeal must serve to have the injustice removed and justice to be restored. Normally this action is started by those most closely involved, the victims therefore. But in more cases than one they have been so damaged that they are incapable of doing so, or have even turned away from God and the church and thus do no longer seek justice in the church.

In suchlike cases I am of the opinion that the nearest relatives followed by the church consistory are the obvious persons to take the matter in hand, to start the action for restoration of justice and peace. In my opinion this agrees with what the Scripture teaches us regarding justice and peace and also with the principles concerning church discipline, as laid down in our church order. Should those family members and church consistory fail to act, it would not be right to let injustice continue because no-one has 'committed a case for trial' at the major assembly. In that case, other church-members who support justice, should also have the opportunity to be heard at the major assembly. You will note that I am articulating decreasing delegation here: first...,then...,further...

Of course it can happen that a case in the congregation can lead to such a complex of events that many more church members get involved with it. If the consistory makes announcements that are experienced as unjust and untrue by members of the congregation, each church member, in principle, has the freedom to lodge his/her objections. Also then the various grades of involvement (by the church members) must be taken into account.

Furthermore, in letters of appeal by third parties the actual case is often not dealt with, but with related questions of church polity and ethical issues, connected to what one sees a consistory is doing. It is clear that a right to appeal is connected with this, just as with other actions and decisions of a consistory.

Thus far my answers and advice.

I wish you much wisdom and may God confirm your work with his blessing!

With hearty greetings,

M te Velde
Kampen NL

Advice Received – Dr J Douma – re reporting sexual abuse.

To your question whether it was right of the victim to go to the civil authorities (Romans 13) and report the sexual abuse I answer the following:

Sexual abuse is a very serious crime which, according to today's prevailing, general view, deserves punishment via the civil authorities. For the victims the repercussions are such that the rest of their lives are tarred by its brush. The damage done is so great that, without question, they must have the right to involve the civil authorities who, in contrast to a consistory, are able to establish a thorough investigation.

Noting the inadequate manner in which the consistory concerned handled the case, I have no qualms **not** to consider 1 Corinthians 6 here. I also advise that in your decision you clearly show that it is the task of the governing authorities to investigate such cases, and that the consistory has the task to lend every support to the victim, if she wishes to involve the authorities. Of course, there also is an ecclesiastical aspect to the case. This concerns the reconciliation between the victims and those who have become guilty of sexual abuse. This should not, however, be used as a 'cloak of love' which inadequately covers the guilt, guilt that must be punished via the authorities.

Concerning the question whether the case should still be reported to the civil authorities, if the perpetrator had repented and confessed his sins, I answer as follows:

If both parties reach an agreement, it is possible one may consider not to involve the authorities. In that case, please keep in mind that the victims are then vulnerable and can be manipulated, because it may be all-important to the church for the sake of the church's reputation to cover up a sad case. It is quite easy to imagine that victims in their younger years are persuaded/pressured to let the matter rest, but then later come to regret this. They realise how deeply the sexual abuse is affecting their own life, their family life (if they are married), and their life in the church, where people barely pay attention to their concerns any more. After all, has the case not been properly finalised, even in a christian manner? Moreover, if the victims also notice that the perpetrators prosper, while they themselves experience misery and distress, it is understandable and also judicially very proper, that years later they as yet report it to the authorities. I therefore advise that you adopt as a rule that, on the initiative of the victims or their family, and supported by consistory, the authorities are notified without delay, and that consistory does not give in to the (understandable) pressure exerted by the perpetrators to settle the matter (in one's own circle), and thereupon to bury it.

Hoping to have been of service, I close with the wish that this sad case will be finalised by you in good unanimity of spirit. Please inform me how you have used this advice.

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Commending you to God in all your work,

J Douma

Advice Requested – Dr Gootjes re Forgiveness of Sins

Dr NH Gootjes,
110 West 27th Street,
Hamilton, ON,
L9C 5A1
Canada

30 May, 2002

Dear br Gootjes,

Greetings from Kelmscott, Australia! We count it a blessing that the Lord makes available to us a College and a dogmatician where we can seek some assistance!

There exists in our congregation two lines of thought in relation to the second component of the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "as we have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12b). Lord's Day 51 features in the discussions, where the Catechism echoes Scripture on this point with these words: "as we also find this evidence of Thy grace in us that we are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbor."

The phrase "fully *determined*" expresses that there is a wholehearted wanting to forgive, but there's a barrier to completing that forgiveness. Disagreement exists on what the barrier is:

- A. Some would argue that this barrier is within oneself, as is: I am fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive him for what he did to me, but time and again painful memories arise and I –sinful man that I am– have to struggle with my feelings once more.
- B. Others would argue that this barrier is within the other, as in: though I am willing to forgive, the other has not repented of his sin, has not asked me for forgiveness, and so I can't extend to him the forgiveness that's in my heart. Here appeal is made to Luke 17:3f.

To argue for interpretation A: this would be Calvin's position (III.20.45). Ursinus also makes no reference to the condition mentioned in B. Both Luther's Smaller Catechism and the Westminster Catechisms do not go in the direction of B either. But interpretation B makes a strong plea with its reference to Luke 17:3f – a text, admittedly, that Lord's Day 51 does not quote in its proof texts.

Our question to you is this: is Matthew 6:12 (and Jesus' commentary in vs 14f) to be subjected to Luke 17:3f so that the forgiveness Jesus requires us to extend cannot be given unless the offender has repented and asked for forgiveness? In other words: is forgiveness to be something of the heart only, and not of deed, if the offender does not repent of his (alleged) sin (to the satisfaction of the debtor)?

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A second question has arisen that also needs an answer. How are we to square Mt 6:12b (and therefore Mt 6:14f) with the pleas of the Imprecatory Psalms (eg Ps 58, Ps 109)? Do the imprecatory psalms not teach us not to forgive the unrepentant?

To complete the picture: this subject has been tabled at our recent classis, but classis was evenly divided between positions A and B, and therefore unable to assist us.

To provide you with more background information to the questions asked, we append to this letter copies of two sermons preached by our minister on Lord's Day 51. These sermons have been the subject of complaint from within the congregation to the consistory and eventually to classis. Copies of the complaints to consistory are also attached. In response Consistory has done considerable research amongst the church fathers, copy of which is also enclosed. Consistory's document did not satisfy everybody. Particularly the second question listed above arose in response to this document, and we are unsure how to answer it.

Brother, we realize that you have much to do in your work at the College. Even so, if you could spare us some time to help us with our questions we would appreciate it greatly.

With Christian greetings,

Rev C Bouwman,
Chairman

PO Posthuma,
Clerk

Advice Received – Dr N H Gootjes – Forgiveness of Sins

To the consistory of the
Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott
P.O. Box 186, Kelmscott
Western Australia

Copy to Rev. C. Bouwman
324 Lake Road
Westfield 6111
Western Australia

Hamilton, June 13, 2002

Dear Brothers,

I received your letter, dated May 30, 2002, concerning a serious difference of opinion which has arisen on the interpretation of the fifth petition. The difference concerns the explanation of the addition to this petition, the statement "as we also have forgiven our debtors" (RSV; NIV). An interpretation of this expression was presented in sermons on Lord's Day 51 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Objections were voiced concerning the interpretation. This issue has already been discussed at the level of classis.

This means that, notwithstanding extensive discussions, as yet no consensus has grown out of this. This is regrettable, all the more so since there is hurt. And this happens in connection with a prayer to God asking for the forgiveness of our sins! Forgiveness is a precious gift God freely grants to us, earned by Jesus Christ in his suffering and death. We all need this grace, and all of us must ask God daily for it. It is my sincere hope that the fundamental unity in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be restored. It is for that purpose that I write the following remarks.

THE ISSUE

The issue came up as a confessional issue, as it concerns the interpretation of one of our confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism. The Catechism, in its explanation of the fifth petition, also touches on the addition, when it says: As we also find this evidence of Thy grace in us that we are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbour.

This is explained in the introduction of the first sermon of October 18, 1998 as follows:

"For with this fifth petition we make a statement about ourselves; we say that we *have* forgiven, yes, and remain *ready* to forgive, those who have offended and do offend us." In the beginning of the first point, the following was said: "These sinful disciples want to receive the ear of the holy God? Then *they need first to do something about the sins which stand between themselves and God.*"

The sermon comes back to this in the third point:

- "It may be that the neighbour has hurt us in the very core of our being, has ruined our name, assaulted my personhood through rape, you name it- and we very much feel that he owes us an apology, ought somehow to pay. But the Lord, beloved, would have us know that our debt with Him is much greater still. And *God forgives*, freely! In gratitude for the abundance of deliverance God has granted us, it is now our privilege to forgive any and all who have hurt us." The sermon, therefore, discussed this sentence from the Catechism on forgiving the neighbour as stating an obligation for the redeemed.

Much debate followed, but the viewpoint presented here was not significantly altered. This is the doctrinal issue I was asked to evaluate.

As far as I can see, three issues need to be discussed.

- The first question is, how the Catechism explains this petition in Lord's Day 51.
- The second question must dig deeper, going to the foundation of our faith, God's revelation. The question is what the Bible itself says about forgiveness of those who sinned against us.
- The third is how the sermons dealt with this issue of forgiveness.

THE EXPLANATION IN THE CATECHISM

The fifth petition consists of two parts, the actual petition and an additional statement. The way in which the Catechism explains the petition is remarkable in its form: it formulates the explanation of the petition in the form of a prayer addressed by God's people to God. In other words, we are not taught what forgiveness is (that was already done in Lord's Day 21), rather, we are taught how to ask for forgiveness.

That is the reason why the catechism not only deals with the forgiveness of sins itself, but draws particular attention to the persons who pray. The Christians who ask for forgiveness, also confess something about themselves. They are people who find an evidence of God's grace in themselves. And this evidence is further explained as: "we are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbour." It should not be overlooked that this sentence does not speak of actually forgiving the neighbour, but of *preparedness* to forgive. The Catechism does not urge the Christians to forgive, but says that they are to be fully ready to forgive. The same thought is expressed in the German text ("*dasz unser gantzer, fursatz ist...*") and in the Latin text ("*quod firmiter nobis *propositum* habemus*").

The fact that the Catechism concentrates on the willingness of forgiveness is confirmed in the explanation by Ursinus. Dealing with this final section of the petition, he wrote: "For if we would obtain forgiveness for ourselves we must also *extend* forgiveness to others" (emphasis added). We receive further insight in the original intent when Ursinus, in his lectures on the Catechism for his students, discussed an objection to the interpretation of this statement. The objection is that Paul, according to 2

Tim. 2:4, did not forgive Alexander, and yet he (Paul) received forgiveness. This could lead to the conclusion that our forgiveness is not absolutely necessary for us to obtain forgiveness from God. This objection would undermine the teaching of the Catechism. Ursinus comes with a complicated reasoning, distinguishing three kinds of forgiveness. The first kind of forgiveness is to forego revenge. In that sense Paul forgives Alexander, for he does not seek revenge. But Ursinus goes on to say that in two other respects there is no forgiveness: the sinner must be punished; and the sinner must be judged as a wicked man as long as he does not repent.¹² It can be admitted that this limitation of forgiveness to foregoing revenge is questionable, to say the least. But it is very clear that Ursinus did not consider the addition to the fifth petition as meaning that we have actually to forgive all those who sinned against us before we can pray this petition.

When the sermon of 1998 urges the congregation: "God holds nothing against me, God set me free of my debt, and so I'm to hold nothing against any one else; I'm to free all those who have run up a debt with me", it goes beyond the explanation of fifth petition in the Heidelberg Catechism.

THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS

It is not enough to conclude that the Catechism did not mean to teach us that we have to forgive every sin committed against us. We have to go beyond the confession to Scripture, and ask what God's Word teaches us concerning the forgiveness of sins. Are we obliged by God to forgive those who sinned against us, whatever their attitude is?

The basis for the explanation of the Catechism can be found in the original teaching of the prayer by our Lord Jesus Christ, in Matthew 6. Here we have to come back to the additional words in the Heidelberg Catechism. Does the Catechism do justice to Christ's original statement: "as we also have forgiven our debtors" when it explains this as meaning that we find the evidence of God's grace in us, that we are fully determined to *forgive* our neighbour?

Before this question can be answered, another issue must be briefly mentioned. The translation "as we have forgiven" is questionable, it has little support in the Greek texts of the Bible. The great majority of the manuscripts has the present: As we forgive. This formulation of the petition in the present form is also the background for the explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism.

More important for our purpose is considering the question how we receive forgiveness. The Catechism does not leave any doubt about this, by formulating this in the form of a request or prayer: "Do not impute to us ... any of our transgressions". By explaining it as a request, the Catechism

¹² These statements can be found in *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism* (tr. G.W. Williard; Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, repr. of the 1842 edition) 651 and 652.

carefully follows the Lord's Prayer, which does not provide us with a statement on forgiveness but teaches us how to ask for forgiveness. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to ask for forgiveness in order to receive forgiveness.

When it explains the addition: "as we also have forgiven our debtors" (or: "as we also forgive our debtors"), it takes into account that forgiveness follows confession of sin. The Catechism does not simply state that we have forgiven our debtors. Rather, it says that "We are *fully determined* whole-heartedly to forgive our neighbour." The Catechism, by inserting these words, exactly represents the meaning of the petition as Christ taught it, by taking into account the parallel ("as") that exists between God's act of forgiveness at our request and our willingness to grant forgiveness.¹³ The only difference is that in the petition we actually make that request, while we can only wait for the request from our neighbour. That is why the Catechism cannot say more at this point than: "We are determined."

That forgiveness follows confession is confirmed throughout Scripture. In the context of the laws about the sin offering, God prescribed: "When anyone is guilty of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned" (Lev 5:5) followed by a sacrifice. Psalm 32 speaks of a blessing on those whose sins are forgiven. But it also speaks of the way in which forgiveness is obtained: in the way of acknowledging sins, vs. 4. After confession! God forgave the guilt of his sin, vs. 5. In Solomon's prayer, this is connected with the temple: "Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people... And when you hear, forgive" (1 Kings 8:30). The same can be seen in the New Testament. When Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive his brother who sins against him, the answer is that forgiveness is in principle unlimited. At the same time, the parable makes it very clear that forgiveness follows the request for forgiveness (Mat 18:21-35, esp. vs. 32). This teaching is repeated by the apostle John: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). This forgiveness is the model after which we should forgive: "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:13)

THE TEACHING IN THE SERMONS

Coming back to the sermons, in my opinion they have caused confusion. I will concentrate on the sermon of October 18, 1998, where the problems began. In this sermon, the meaning of the Heidelberg Catechism

¹³ See also the remark by W.D. Davies, D.A. Allison: "Implicit in the Lord's Prayer is the fundamental obligation to recognize the need of God's forgiveness", in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 612.

is misunderstood, and the meaning of the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is misunderstood.

I have no doubt in my mind that it is based on an honest misunderstanding. The sermon was made with personal integrity, and the confusion it caused was not intended. But the fact remains, in my opinion, that the resulting sermon did slant the teaching of Lord's Day 51 in a way that is not in agreement with the Catechism, nor with the original statement made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason why this is called a condition can be found in the passage following the prayer, Matthew 6 :14, 15. Here, extending forgiveness is presented as a condition for receiving forgiveness. According to Dr. J. Van Bruggen, these verses should not be connected with the prayer for forgiveness specifically, but with the whole prayer.¹⁴ However that may be, since vs. 14 follows the prayer it does not remove the need to ask for forgiveness expressed in the prayer. The Father will not forgive without being asked.

The inherent tension in the sermon shows in the fourth line: "We say that we have forgiven, yes, and remain ready to forgive, those who have offended and do offend us." Two sentences from Matthew 5 are connected, vs. 12 and vs. 14. However, the need for confessing sins as it is done in prayer (vs. 12) is not mentioned.

The same tension can be noticed in the third part of the sermon, dealing specifically with the additional statement. This section has a good beginning: "The Lord had added a phrase in which we describe what we've done." But this soon changes into a command: "Built into this fifth petition, then, is an obligation for the redeemed." However, no obligation is mentioned in the Lord's Prayer. There is a statement of fact: "Through the grace of God (the Lord's Prayer makes us say) I have already forgiven people who came to me apologizing for their sins." This differs from the statement in the sermon, that "it is the will of God that we forgive the neighbour *before* we come to God seeking forgiveness of our debts with Him." This 'before' is in no way based on the prayer. I think I know which text was in the mind of the preacher, but that statement is out of place in the context of Matthew 6. Moreover, the sermon makes a beautiful sign of faith "as we have forgiven our neighbour" into a condition of forgiveness. Finally, the sermon applies the need of forgiveness to life in the covenant: "It may be that the neighbour has hurt us in the very core of our being, has ruined our name, assaulted my personhood through rape, you name it - and we very much feel that he owes us an apology, ought somehow to pay." This sentence can only lead to the misunderstanding among the hearers that, as our own sins before God are so much greater, sins committed against us (specifically incest) do not amount to much. Here, things are confused that should be kept separate.

¹⁴ J. Van Bruggen, *Matteus: Het evangelie voor Israel* (Kampen: Kok, 1990) 114.

The confusion is aggravated by the use of the Year of Jubilee in the context of forgiveness of sins. This rests on a misunderstanding of the Year of Jubilee. The Year of Jubilee never meant that all sins were forgiven without punishment. It led to cancellation of debts, but it never led to cancellation of punishment on sins such as rape and incest. In fact, such sins were punishable in Israel with capital punishment, so that the perpetrator was removed from this world as the consequence of his sin. Using the Year of Jubilee for forgiveness leads to great accidents when applied to sins in general. And it is particularly offensive for those who have been victims of rape and incest.

I am sure that the minister did not intend to gloss over sins committed by Christians, nor would he deny the need for asking forgiveness. It is regrettable that the explanation on this petition did not stay closer to the explanation in the Heidelberg Catechism.

I hope and trust that agreement can be reached on the basis of the explanation of this petition as found in the Heidelberg Catechism. In my opinion, the catechism has not only explained the content of the petition correctly, but has also done justice to the meaning of the additional sentence. God forbid that the confession of the great gift of forgiveness of our sins should lead to discord and division in the congregation.
Yours in Christ's service N.H. Gootjes

Advice requested and Received from Dr. Gootjes re: Calvin on our Forgiveness of Others

Dear Dr. Gootjes:

In preparation for Synod, I have been reading what Calvin writes on our forgiveness of others. Would your busy schedule allow you time to read what I've written below, and give me your opinion whether this reflects Calvin properly, also with respect to footnote 3? The proof texts are mine. Maybe you can add to or improve on these.

Yours in Christ,

In one place, Calvin gives this general definition of our forgiveness. ***“Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone. This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice.”***^{15[1]} Elsewhere,^{16[2]} he makes a two-fold distinction is made concerning the way that offences are forgiven:

1. In one sense, offences are to be forgiven **unconditionally** (apart from repentance). This forgiveness consists of seeking no revenge (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19), but repaying kindness in place of injury (Rom 12:17). This forgiveness consists of harbouring no hatred against the offender in our heart, but loving him who deliberately provokes us (Matt 5:43,44) and who adds to his former load of offences (Matt 5:39), endeavouring by every sort of good to win his favour and commendation (Rom 12:21). **In this sense of forgiveness, we must forgive even though the offender has not repented.** But where there is no repentance, there is no reconciliation, for we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of him, as he deserves (2 Tim 4:14).
- 2) In another sense, offenses are to be forgiven **conditionally** (where there is repentance—Matt 17:3,4). This forgiveness consists of receiving a **brother** into favour (Matt 18:15), to forget the injury^{17[3]} and think

^{15[1]} Institutes, III,20,45

^{16[2]} Commentary on Matthew 18:21

^{17[3]} Calvin writes in his commentary on Matthew 6:14: *“Those who refuse to forget the injuries which have been done to them, devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and knowingly prevent God from forgiving them.”* Does this *“forgetting the injury”* belong to the first step or the second? That is, do we forget the injury in the sense of never more bringing it to mind before there is repentance and reconciliation, or after? I am inclined to say that it belongs to the second step. That is, we are called to *“forget the injury”* once there is repentance and reconciliation. I say this for two reasons. If we are to forget it and never bring it to mind, then we cannot admonish the brother for his sin or follow the steps of Mt 18. Secondly, Calvin says that as long as there is no repentance, we may still entertain an unfavourable opinion of the

favourably of him, and to be convinced that the remembrance of his offense is blotted out in the sight of God. **In this sense of forgiveness, “we must be ready and prepared to grant forgiveness...as often as the sinner shall repent.”**

I don't think Calvin sees these as two distinct ways to achieve the same goal of forgiveness. Rather, I think he conceives of them as two “steps” to achieve forgiveness in the full sense of the word. The first “step” of this forgiveness is intended to facilitate the second. For by showing the forgiveness described in the first step, the injured aim at heaping coals of fire upon the head of the offender (Prov 25:21-22; Rom 12:20) and to overcome evil with good, so that the offender might be filled with shame and remorse, that he might repent, and that he might seek and receive forgiveness from the one he injured and so be reconciled to him.

-----Original Message-----

From: Dr. N.H. Gootjes

Sent: Friday, 27 June 2003 3:46 AM

Subject: Re: Calvin on Forgiveness

In response to your message, I did not know that the 'forgiveness' issue would be discussed at the upcoming Synod. As I have been corresponding with Rev. Bouwman on this issue, and have given my opinion, I do not want to involve myself in the discussion which is taking place.

However, I can respond to the theological question about Calvin's interpretation of Mat. 18:21ff, which is discussed in conjunction with Luke 17:4. In the section referred to, Calvin has made the transition to Luke 17, as can be seen in his formulation: From the words of Luke another question arises... Christ's words as Luke recorded them, appear to allow Christians to deny forgiveness to evil people. That determines the following discussion of forgiveness. Calvin spends considerable effort to make his views on this issue clear.

In answering this question, Calvin states that sins are forgiven in two ways. For your question, the first statement is particularly important: "If someone has done an injustice to me, I, having put aside the feeling of revenge, do not stop to love him by repaying injustice with a good deed. Although I feel unfavourably about him, as he deserves, it can be said that I forgive him." It should be noted that right from the beginning Calvin states that "I" (the Christian) feel unfavourably about the person who treated me badly. Furthermore, nowhere in his further explanation does Calvin state that this negative feeling is wrong,

offender. Only after repentance and reconciliation is that unfavourable opinion of the offender removed from our mind.

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because "I" should be favourably inclined. Rather, Calvin says that the evildoer deserves that "I" do not look on that person with favour. And yet, it can be said that I forgive him, says Calvin. In this context, this forgiveness must refer to "having put aside the feeling of revenge." This is a very limited form of forgiveness.

This interpretation of 'forgiveness' is confirmed in the next sentence: "For when God commands us to do well to our enemies, he does not require it in that sense that we approve in them what God himself condemns, but only that [God] wants that our hearts are purged of all hatred." Again, the limited meaning of 'forgiveness' is obviously 'not allowing hatred to grow in one's heart'. Again, it is expressed in a negative statement.

Calvin continues: "In this kind of forgiveness it is not to be expected that he who has sinned proceeds to placate us, so that one ought to love those who grieve us with their actions, who reject grace and add to the old sins against us." Here, Calvin indicates the situation in which this limited kind of forgiveness takes place. This applies to the situation when the sinner does not turn to his victim in order to seek reconciliation. In other words, in the situation where no reconciliation is brought about, the 'forgiveness' is by necessity very limited.

The second kind of forgiveness is, that we so receive the brother in grace, that we feel about him in the right way and are convinced that the remembrance of his sin is wiped out before God. Is this unqualified forgiveness? Calvin deals with this issue

somewhat later. He brings up the question whether someone who in words confesses his repentance should be believed. Calvin's answer is straightforward: we would knowingly and willingly go wrong. He calls repentance a sacred thing, which requires careful investigation. Rather, Christ wants him to be admitted to reconciliation when the sinner has given a provable sign of conversion. In other words, a clear action from the sinner is required before his this kind of forgiveness can take place (See for all this, Calvin's Opera, 45, 519f.).

It can be seen clearly that Calvin distinguished two different cases of forgiveness, and that the distinction is based on whether there is repentance or not. The first kind concentrates on abandoning hatred, but does not include friendship or even restored relationship, the second does include restoration. These two are not opposites, the second goes far beyond the first and includes that the damaged party has restored the relationship to the other. One can debate about the question whether the first can be called 'forgiveness', it appears to me that the first is not forgiveness in the sense we mostly use the word. But the issue is not the words, but the content.

I hope that this is helpful to you. The best way to go is simply follow the Catechism, and not go beyond that in the Catechism preaching.

May the Lord bless the Australian churches.

Advice Requested – Dr J Faber, Dr B Kamphuis, Dr J Douma – re Forgiveness of Sins

Advisory Committee of the 2003 Synod of Rockingham of the FRC Australia.

Esteemed professors of dogmatics, Dr J Faber, Dr N Gootjes (see above), and Dr B Kamphuis, and professor of ethics, Dr J Douma

Synod 2003 has asked the above committee to study 17 appeals, appeals that stem from a case of sexual abuse. We as committee are near the end of these appeals.

In the course of dealing with issues that stem from this case the minister of the congregation concerned preached sermons on LD 51 (the last one is attached), teaching how people should forgive sins (also the sins of the perpetrators of sexual abuse). This caused considerable controversy. The matter was taken to classis, which made a decision (see below). This decision in turn caused unrest and has been appealed by a number of persons/ consistories. As advisory committee we have drafted a proposed judgment for synod (not sent to synod as yet). We would like you to read that draft proposal (attached) and to scrutinize it, offering corrections, additions, etc.

Classis decision concerned:

3. Classis North October 2002 Articles 17 & 19

3.1. Decision of Classis: When Rev. Bouwman and consistory FRC Kelmscott teach that we must always forgive our neighbour, regardless of repentance, they do not do full justice to all that Scripture teaches about forgiveness of sins. Likewise, the appellants do not do full justice to Scripture when they imply that we can only forgive where repentance is present and forgiveness is requested.

3.2. Grounds:

3.2.1. Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt

3.2.2. Scripture teaches that there are two ways in which sin can be forgiven:

c) It can be freely forgiven even when repentance is not (yet) present: (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60)

d) Forgiveness can be withheld where there is no repentance, Romans 12:17-21, Ps. 137:8-9. In this case we may not bear hatred.

Also, we would like to ask advice about one specific issue from an appeal.

We quote from this appeal (we arranged the sentences so that they would make sense to you):

Calvin writes: "Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone [cf Isa 43:25]! This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice" (*Institutes*, III.20.46).

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The focus of the specific appeal was not God forgiving man's sins, but people forgiving each other. In this *inter-personal* context, it is said (Grounds 1.2.1 of the classis decision), "Forgiveness means primarily to pardon sin, to remove guilt." We do not know of any place in the Bible where *people remove people's guilt*. In fact, are people *able* to remove another person's guilt?

As advisory committee we have drafted the following response:

In the fifth petition we learn that men can incur debt with respect to fellow man just as we incur debt towards God (cf. Matt 6:12, Luke 11:4). Men can also sin and trespass against fellow man just as they sin and trespass against God (cf. Matt 18:21, Matt 6:14-15, Matt 18:35 [KJV/NKJV]). Inasmuch as the sins that men commit against fellowman are first and foremost sins against God, men are not able to forgive the guilt of these sins. These can only be forgiven by God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf. Luke 5:21). But to the extent that men can incur debt, and insofar as men can sin and trespass against fellow man, to the same extent men must forgive fellow man their debts, sins and trespasses. In this sense, they must no longer hold their guilt against them, but pardon them and be reconciled to them.

Could we ask you to give your advice on this specific matter.

Prof B Kamphuis, we will translate your advice and give you a copy of our translation.

We will notify you all what we do with the advice given.

Since we hope to finalise our work next Tuesday, 9 Sept/03, we ask you ahead of time if it is possible for you to give such advice within that time-span. Dr Gootjes has also been asked for other advice.

We would really appreciate such advice. A check on our work by experts is not a luxury in these matters. You would really serve our churches by such advice. We would like to put all letters of advice together in a package for the members of synod. If you have problems with that, would you let us know, please?

With hearty greetings in the Lord,

Rev W. Huizinga, convenor of the advisory committee

Dear Rev Huizinga,

Since I have a very limited e-mail access, I cannot read your attachments. For what I could read, I do not have any corrections. I leave it to my younger colleagues to answer fully.

I remember that dr. J. Douma wrote in Nederlands Dagblad on this topic of human forgiveness of sexual abuse. Greetings from home to home and "Gode bevolen".

Dr J Faber

Esteemed Rev Huizinga,

Unfortunately, owing to a move, your mail came too late for me to give a thorough response before 9 Sept. I have not been able to study all the material thoroughly.

Thus I must let one comment suffice. Your proposed answer with respect to the fifth petition is completely just. We must not forget that Calvin in his Institutes III.20,25 writes with the roman practice of the confessional, in which people (i.e. priests – translator) presumed to forgive guilt towards God. That is completely different to the question you face, which concerns exactly serious guilt between people.

I wish you much wisdom from our God.

With hearty greetings,

B Kamphuis.

Esteemed colleague Huizinga,

You have sent me a number of items, about which I do not feel right to give my judgment. I do not namely know precisely all the details, which case is referred to with respect to forgiveness and what plays a decisive role, etc. Therefore I refrain from commenting. But I can and do send you the article which my colleague Faber referred to. I also attach a piece at the end, which was my response to a letter to the editor in the ND, written shortly after my article. Maybe you can use it, maybe not. But I gladly send it to you.

With hearty greetings,

J Douma

Sent in by	J Douma
Column	Moral Reflection
Date placed	13 May, 2003 in Nederlands Dagblad

UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS?

Recently I read about someone who had endured 17 years forced labor in Siberia, and who was still able to write down how human feelings die under the terrible conditions of cold, hunger, hard labor and humiliation. One human feeling seemed the most stubborn, namely, bearing a grudge. *The feeling of resentment was the last feeling that accompanied a person as he went to nothing, to the world of the dead* (quote in NRC of 8 May/03). That feelings of hate and bitterness can run strong can be noticed by the letters to the editor in Nederlands Dagblad, letters dealing with the subject of 'forgiving'. People who had experienced how their lives became an ash-heap because of sexual abuse or because of some other terrible evil often saw no chance to get rid of their feelings of bitterness and hate. They also did not want to use the word 'forgive' in connection with people who have so devastated their lives. How can you forgive someone who absolutely does not understand what he has done to you? Some writers stated that such forgiveness could not be required. One writer said that such a one-sided forgiveness was not the biblical norm. A second writer thought that forgiveness was only possible when that was genuinely asked by the guilty party. A third wrote that first our 'healthy feelings for justice' must be satisfied, because only then can bitterness and hate disappear.

The number of letters to the editor shows already that we touch on a sensitive question. Many are afraid that forgiveness becomes a cheap matter. Just try to help people whose whole life has been violated by a good-for-nothing rogue who did not know how to keep his hands to himself! Or who totally ruined your marriage! And then forgive, just like that?! That does not help the victim in working through their misery, and it certainly does not help the perpetrator either, for he all too quickly starts to think that the affair is resolved. His thoughts are, *Just stop your complaining, please, because life goes on!*

Before I say what I consider decisive in the discussion about forgiveness, I need to make two remarks. The first is that from experience I know how difficult it is for many to talk about forgiveness, when it concerns evils inflicted on them. I can well understand that and therefore must be careful in my judgment. Let me try not to direct my artillery at any one in particular, because I respect the good intentions of all the letters to the editor. In the second place I underline that pleading for forgiveness may never short-change what righteousness or justice means. The biblical testimony about God's righteous judgment, which repays every person according to their deeds, is more than clear. The Bible nowhere teaches us to forget about the evil and to trumpet abroad that God

does the same. The truth is that God hates the evil, because He sacrificed the life of his Son for the atoning of our own evil and that of others.

Yet I would find it a great flaw if some would think that we may not speak about unconditional forgiveness from our side, because such a forgiveness would not take guilt seriously. Or because this forgiveness would blockade the way to remorse, repentance and cleansing! Or because such forgiveness and acceptance of the other, without him repenting, would deaden his conscience. All these pronouncements run aground, in my view, on the testimony of Holy Scripture. Jesus prays on the cross, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Lk 23:34). Here sin is taken very seriously, because if the mockers had understood the seriousness of their deeds, they would never have considered doing what they did. One can do the most terrible things out of ignorance (Acts 3:17). They would not have crucified the Lord of glory if they had known what they were doing (1 Cor 2:8). I know people who have sinned grievously and who do not realise full well how they have destroyed the lives of their victims. May I, and what is more, may their victims pray to God that He will forgive them in spite of that?

In Jesus' prayer on the cross, just as in the prayer of Stephen for his executors, we do not find any conditions which the wrong-doers must satisfy (acknowledge guilt, etc). Stephen realises how great the crime is that his enemies inflict on him. *Lord, do not charge them with his sin*. Paul who stood close by will later on realise what he did, while he absolutely did not perceive this when he contributed to the persecution of Stephen and other christians (Acts 7:58; 1 Tim 1:13).

It is also not true that the prayer for forgiveness blockades the road to remorse and repentance. Paul and many others repented, when they – gripped by God – started to realise what they had done. Others refused to realise this. But even right up to today it makes a deep impression when someone is prepared to pray for his enemies. And what does it mean to pray for your enemies except to ask God to forgive them and to free them from the delusion of their unbelief? Does it not belong to the kernel of the christian faith that we do not hate our enemies, but instead love them (Mt 5:44 ff)?

The error (!) that we must at all times, irrespective of the attitude of the opponent, forgive, would contradict Rom.12:19, according to one letter to the editor. Now Rom 12:19 speaks of the wrath or vengeance of God. It is important not to forget the justice of God. But, I would say, think about it in the sequence which Rom 12 gives. Vengeance belongs to *God*, at *his* time, while we in Rom 12 are called to bless those who persecute us, to have regard for good things in the sight of all men, not to desire revenge, and to provide food and drink to our enemy, so that we heap coals of fire on his head.

I understand how hard it is to put this into practice. I also understand that some – psychically broken as they are – cannot do this. But I do not understand that we must therefore adjust the biblical message and thus may not speak about unconditional forgiveness from our side. We must pray, *forgive us our debts, just as we also forgive our debtors*. It does not say, *just as we forgive our debtors who realise that they are guilty*. Whoever believes that Jesus Christ

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died for us ungodly people can also understand why the fifth petition is formulated so simply, without *yes, but...* God wants all men to repent. He wants people to realise and to confess their guilt. He wants the ungodly to be cast out of his congregation. But He wants from *us* that whenever we ask Him to forgive us, that we are fully determined to forgive our neighbour. Without ifs or buts. There were too many ifs and buts in the letters to the editor, in my view. Kamsteeg, who began the discussion, wrote: *the forgiveness which God asks is something that you give away freely and without conditions to someone who does not deserve it*. I have already mentioned how hard that can be. But still one point about the difficulty to forgive. Whoever really realises how his own debt is undeservedly cancelled, shall learn to let go of people who threaten to embitter his life. Then the image of the Other rises up before us (Heb 12:1 ff.).

I would like to make some comments about Rev J Ophoff's article (7 April/03 in ND) on this:

1. I read in his contribution that Jesus asks faith and repentance; and otherwise one does not receive forgiveness. But I read that both Jesus and Stephen ask for forgiveness for people who showed no faith and repentance. Stephen prays for those who stone him, while he before this had said that they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and always resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Whether ignorant and stiff-necked sinners receive forgiveness, is not our business, but God's. But that we may pray for God's patience for people who do not believe and do not repent, is shown by the prayers of Jesus and Stephen.

2. It sometimes appears that what I just wrote, can no longer be said because it brings victims of sexual abuse into difficulties. But we bring them into difficulties:

- If we do not at the same time continue to call it scandalous that one christian can sexually abuse the other;
- If we would refuse to cooperate so that the civil authorities and the consistory, respectively, punish the guilty ones in a judicial and spiritual way, eventually with excommunication from the congregation of Christ;
- If we would cooperate so that the guilty ones claim the forgiveness of Christ, while they try to avoid a genuine and generous confession of guilt; and
- If we have no understanding that we can push victims of sexual abuse deeper into the pit by thumpingly quoting the words of Jesus and Stephen.

Most of what I have said here is a repetition of what I previously wrote in my column Moral Reflection (Moreel Beraad). But the matter, which Rev Ophoff raises, is important enough to come back to.

J. Douma

Procedure For Appeals ad Art. 31, c.o.- Dr M te Velde

Esteemed brother,

I still want to elaborate some more on the questions raised by you. It concerns fairly minor points, of course, but these can often create lengthy discussions at a synod. In the hope that my information and advice can save you time and energy, I gladly provide this brotherly service to the churches in Australia.

1. Concerning the ruling on voting rights, it must be ascertained in which role the synod is functioning here. Based on its own agenda, a reformed synod is recognised to have diverse roles, e.g. drawing up of ecclesiastical regulations, specifying policies, making ruling decisions, and – what applies here – functioning as a court in matters of appeal.

In the normal structure of society this last role or function has been incorporated as a separate organisation. In The Netherlands this is called a ‘separation of powers’. The judiciary powers are not exercised by the same organs that make the laws and govern the land (parliament and cabinet council), but by separate law-courts. This gives room for an independent sentence. In reformed church polity the administration of justice is not separated from, but put on the agenda of the normal ecclesiastical meetings that also deal with all other church-matters.

This function of synod - as a body administering justice – also requires that it takes into account the criteria befitting a jurisdiction. The composition of and the decision made by a synod on appeals, must conform with what we read in the Scriptures concerning administration of justice, especially when it concerns persons. Moreover, the manner in which the principles of justice are upheld in one’s own social context must be taken into account into the procedure.

In this case the criterion is impartiality. The judges must be impartial. Universally this means that they may not be relatives or friends of the accused or the victims, and they may not have been involved in the case in one way or another. Also, they may not have passed judgment on the case previously. That would make them biased (literally, prejudiced) and force them to co-judge their own work, their own prior decisions. It is also not allowed, if they had voted against a certain judgment in the lesser law-court for example. Even in that case they are not acceptable as judges in the higher court. The general rule should be that you cannot judge twice in the same case.

I understand that this can sometimes cause problems for you in the small bond of the FRCA churches. Concerning ministers, you cannot avoid the same persons appearing again and again through the years in the same matters of government, conduct and rule-making. You could compensate that by having two elders for every minister at the synod. But in cases of appeal, righteous judgment requires that no-one who has previously been involved in the case, or

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was connected to the judging thereof, has a right to vote on it. Contradicting this would violate one of the most basic principles of justice: impartiality.

In The Netherlands, in a situation as described by you, the delegates sent by classis (*casu quo*, particular synod) against which the appeal is made on the grounds of art. 32 would by no means have any voting rights. That would include the delegates (from that classis) who had no say in the prior decision-making and as such would not have been involved. Besides them, all others who were ever involved refrain from voting, also as per art.32. In the Dutch churches, moreover, the restraint put on these delegates from voting is extended to their non-involvement in the discussions. Brothers who had previous involvement are expected to restrain themselves. They may not exert an undue influence on the proceedings. At the General Synod of 2002 such a delegate would purposely seat himself in the public gallery, and/or got his secundus to replace him.

I understand that this cannot be done at your synod. But the principle remains that you ensure that the administration of justice is impartial. Members of synod who have personal involvement or have previously voted on the case should be replaced by their secundi, if at all possible. Should that not be feasible, they will have to refrain from voting. Naturally, all delegates from the church concerned refrain from voting; their consistory is a party in the case.

The reasoning about a 'new assembly' and that the previous classis (which made the decision) are no longer in existence are an echo of the struggle of 1944 and the first few years thereafter. Independent-minded ministers like C. Vonk and G. Visée, to name a few, made extreme pronouncements (based on statements from Greijdanus and P. Deddens) which are apparently still heard by the brothers at your synod. But this same P.Deddens, already in the 1950's, extensively opposed such pronouncements about ecclesiastical meetings.

These are only pseudo-argumentations anyway. When determining voting rights, the question is not what the relation is between one classis and the next, but whether an individual delegate could perhaps be biased, whether he may judge twice in the same case, and whether there is unanimity amongst the members who are entitled to vote concerning a person's prior involvement being either an advantage or disadvantage. I repeat, no-one may judge his own case by participating more than once in the same appeal. What may be imaginable at a permanent governing board (think of a consistory), is unthinkable at a major assembly. Moreover, it is purely theoretical to presume that a delegate, after a certain time-span, can re-judge a case with a complete open mind. The meeting of synod may be new, the man is not.

In the 1990's we had a workgroup of theologians and lawyers which drew up an appeals-regulation ('appel-regeling' can mean reporting or appealing to the authorities) for the churches. In the meantime, many classes have adopted this

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regulation. The general synod also adopted it; you can find it on www.Kerkrecht.nl. Various points of a procedural nature

Thus far my answers and advice.

I wish you much wisdom and may God confirm your work with his blessing!

With hearty greetings,

M te Velde
Kampen NL

